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CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT OF ITALY

by

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PREFACE

WHAT is the contribution of present-day Italy to contemporary thought? The contribution is undoubtedly great. The writer was present last year at the reopening of the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley, and will never forget the great inward thrill experienced when at a certain moment the massed bands started playing the music of Verdi's great chorus, "*Va', pensiero su l'ali dorate!*" which Marconi's and Righi's scientific genius was spreading not merely throughout the United Kingdom and the British Empire, but to the four corners of the world. How many at that moment in that big audience were aware that, though all humanity on land and sea has benefited by the discoveries of Marconi and Righi, yet no political community has derived more benefit from them than the British Commonwealth of Nations, which is thereby helped to overcome huge natural obstacles to greater political and economic unity? And yet Marconi and Righi are only two of the many outstanding men of scientific genius—Enriques, Peano, Pieri, Padoa, Burali-Forti, Pastore—all alive in Italy to-day and enjoying world-wide fame in

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the field of physico-mathematical studies. In the field of infant education London and Manchester receive almost yearly visits from Maria Montessori, and appreciate her genius almost more than does her native country. And it is not many months since the intellectual *élite* of London had the opportunity of enjoying the dramatic work of Luigi Pirandello, whose theatre expresses so much of the philosophy of life of the intelligentsia of present-day Italy—an outlook to a great extent systematically formulated by Giovanni Gentile. Moreover, the names of Giovanni Gentile, Benedetto Croce, and Bernardino Varisco are by now intimately connected with the vicissitudes of English thought and the intellectual life of English universities.

The modest aim of the present book is to be a somewhat cursory survey of the contributions of contemporary Italy, and especially of these three thinkers, to our evolving notion of the Universe, of Man and of his destiny therein—a sketch of the evolution of these tendencies and of the reactions and criticisms they have provoked and are still provoking. Incidentally, perhaps inevitably, the work comes to be what, to the writer's knowledge, is the first attempt, in the English language, towards a systematic criticism of Italian Neo-Hegelianism. And since Italian Neo-Hegelianism claims to be the logical outcome of all previous forms of Idealism, and even of the whole previous course of philosophic speculation, preparing the

path for the elimination of all transcendent elements in ethics and religion, and for the advent of a purely humanistic education and culture in the world, the presentation and critical examination of this claim must be of the utmost importance to any person interested in the philosophy of religion. Even if the claim be found groundless or grossly exaggerated, there is no doubt it emerges from deeply rooted historical and contemporary causes, and can only be really refuted if taken seriously even in what may at first sight seem to lend itself to G. K. Chesterton's witticisms on thinking maniacs. Peradventure we have the opportunity of studying in present-day Italian contemporary thought an extreme form of diseases from which we are all more or less suffering, and may thus discover, as through a magnifying glass, the germ of the evil. In the world of the spirit, to understand is to conquer, to heal and to be healed.

Perhaps modern ego-centred Idealism is a necessary and historically intelligible reaction to, and on many points a correction of, the excessively abstract and intellectualistic trend of ancient and mediæval Realism, especially of the great tradition which goes back to Plato and has achieved its supreme triumph in Dante's mystical vision and song. Perhaps we even now descry in present history as well as in philosophical tendencies, the first signs of the closing of a great parenthesis which opened with Descartes. Perhaps Italian

Idealism is the *reductio ad absurdum* of the inner logic of the idealistic reaction considered as a self-sufficient philosophy of life.

My cordial thanks are due to the Editor, Dr. W. Tudor Jones, and to Miss Isabella M. Massey, Ph.D. (Marburg), for their suggestions and valuable assistance in matters of style and in the revision of proofs.

ANGELO CRESPI.

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CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT OF ITALY

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Summary.—New spirit in Italian life since the beginning of the twentieth century—Political culture—Religious life and culture—Humanism or Christianity—Papini's conversion as a symptom of the evolution of contemporary Italian literature — Panzini — The passing of Positivism — Federico Enriques and Critical Positivism—The coming of Neo-Hegelianism and the new Italian literature—Pirandello and the philosophy of absolute relativity—Morselli and the revival of Myth.

The end of the nineteenth century, the defeat of the anti-constitutional reaction which culminated in the murder of King Humbert, the opening of a period of freedom of organisation for the working classes and of great increasing prosperity for all, coincide also with a beginning of a new political and national outlook. Whereas during the previous decades Italy had felt politically, economically and even culturally humble before the older and leading world-powers, one now notices a new self-assertiveness, a desire to *fare da sè* (to act by ourselves), to supply Italian needs in an Italian way, with Italian commodities drawn from Italian resources, to resent, with even excessive acerbity, foreign criticism, to

value more highly Italian contributions whether to science, art, or philosophy, in the past and still more in the present; and also to pay greater attention to foreign affairs and proclaim Italy's legitimate right to a greater weight in the world's councils. In a word, the previous form of patriotism, characterised by a noble and generous universalism inherited from classical and legal historical traditions not less than from Catholicism, yields more and more to an increasingly realistic and self-regarding, even aggressive nationalism, in nothing less national than in its manifest imitation of German and French patterns. The founder of Italian Nationalism in the party sense of the word is Corrado Corradini, whose imperialism found its first literary expression in a not negligible drama, *Giulio Cesare;* its first periodical in *Il Regno* (Florence, 1903); culminated in the foundation of the great daily *L'Idea Nazionale*, and received theoretical systematisation in a book on the greatness and power of nations by Corradini himself and in several others, mainly by Francesco Coppola. But, as a whole, it cannot be said that Italian Nationalism has so far seriously influenced Italian culture. Nationalism has not yet, either directly or indirectly, provoked such a blossoming of thought as was the offspring of the early Marxian and Socialistic movements. While Socialism and Marxism are, directly or indirectly, responsible for having stimulated the first and often remarkable

productive efforts of men like Loria, Einaudi, Cabiati, Montemartini, Coletti, Lorenzoni among the economists and sociologists, of men like Croce among the philosophers, of men like Salvemini, Ciccotti, and Ferrero among the historians, Nationalism has, culturally, remained absolutely sterile. Even the old liberal-conservative tradition has given us—for instance, in Gaetano Mosca—infinitely more than newly-born Nationalism. Gaetano Mosca's *Elementi di Scienza Politica* and Vilfredo Pareto's *Les Systêmes socialistes*, with their independently formulated theory of the circulation of naturally formed and freely forming aristocracies as the fundamental historical law, are, indeed, the two greatest political productions of contemporary Italy and, in a way, the pioneers of a possible new school of liberal thought. Their leading idea is that societies owe their progress to the struggle between rival and naturally selected and gifted minorities constantly renewed by fresh elements from below. Political, social, economic ideals and systems are merely war-cries, symbols, fighting weapons with which the ascending minorities gather adherents from the masses in order to dispossess the minorities in power. The lot of the masses is improved mainly through this struggle between the leading *élites*, and progress is greatest when and where Governments perform the task of ensuring the freest circulation of these *élites*, so that at every moment each element may find itself

where its attitudes are best employed. In this manner aristocracy and democracy are shown to be equally necessary, constant and complementary aspects of the social process.

On the whole the scarcity of valuable political literature in modern Italy faithfully mirrors the still very considerable poverty of serious political thinking, and even more of real character and grit in political life. Although there are, nowadays, in Italy very well-informed and edited reviews of politics and economics, they are almost all leading a very precarious life. The only manifestations of political and social culture which reach the average public are the leading articles or the descriptive and critical articles in the best Italian dailies. It is undeniable that the best Italian dailies, such as *La Stampa* (Turin), *Il Corriere della Sera* (Milan), *La Tribuna* (Rome), *Il Giornale d'Italia* (Rome), *La Gazzetta del Popolo* (Rome), *La Guistizia* (Milan), *Il Popolo* (Rome), and even many less important organs of public opinion, are not inferior to any of the best European newspapers both as news-givers and as critics of events and tendencies in the political field and elsewhere.[1] Some periodicals, like *La Critica*, in which Croce and Gentile laid the foundations of the Neo-Hegelian revival in Italy; *Il Leonardo*, in which Italy found the expression of the mystical and romantic layers of her soul

[1] This is no longer true since the suppression of a free and independent press in 1925.

chiefly through the self-revelation of Papini; *La Voce*, Prezzolini's organ of concrete and critical idealism applied to politics, literature, economics, art; *L'Unità*, Salvemini's instrument for the education of a new *élite* of Italian politicians trained in concrete thinking and observation of events and problems, will be indispensable documents of permanent importance for the future student of the formation of contemporary Italy. Politically, *L'Unità* of Salvemini in particular will have to be studied as voicing the dissatisfaction of the most progressive minds of all camps with their respective parties, and of the endeavour to find a common platform, brushing aside vague obsolete formulas, in the concrete study of each single problem. In a sense it has not left any permanent trace in the Italian political mind; in another, its ideas concerning the Adriatic question have found their complete realisation in the Treaty of Rapallo, signed by the leader of those who most vigorously denounced them. The method and spirit of Salvemini's *Unità* have, in a way, survived in the late Piero Gobetti's *Rivoluzione Liberàle*, where, however, the purely empirical spirit of the former review was tempered by permeating philosophical criticism. Gobetti introduced into the historical study of concrete Italian and European problems Croce's inspiring idea of the essential identity of philosophy and history. Post-war Russia, Germany, England, have been

made the objects of special studies by specialists in their respective spheres. Fascism, which, through some of its leading mouthpieces, claims to be not merely the overcoming and transcending of the liberal and democratic State, such as it emerged from "the stupid nineteenth century," but also a new culture and a new religion, has so far, both in theory and in practice, been merely an orgy of bombastic negations, a chaotic mixture of Asiatic despotism, Renaissance amoralism, and Prussian State worship on the one hand, and of self-intoxicating cult of the passing impulse, of unrestrained violence as the highest form of individual, party and national self-realisation on the other: very much like the famous night of Hegelian memory in which all cows are black.

Another aspect of the same increase in spiritual initiative and depth is visible to any student of religious life and culture in Italy. In a sense, of course, original Italian contributions to studies on the history, the psychology and philosophy of religion, to Biblical criticism or to mystical literature are very scarce; compared with the yearly German or English output their bulk is practically negligible. And yet, even in this field, when one considers the weight of adverse circumstances, the change is symptomatic and considerable. Not only is there a greater number of reviews dedicated to religious studies, but also one finds

questions of religious philosophy and history seriously dealt with in dailies and periodicals, till yesterday monopolised by the most uncompromising positivist and naturalistic spirit. The Modernist controversy was itself only a symptom of this changing situation. The Vatican was able to kill it in embryo, because the Modernists, far from being a group moved by a common and organic scheme of thought and action, were minds united only or almost exclusively by negations. Some of them, like Romolo Murri, then still a priest, were theologically orthodox, but aimed at the formation of an autonomous party of social and economic reform inspired by Christian principles and utterly differentiated from traditional clericalism. Others were mainly interested in claiming freedom for historical criticism; others still were intent upon vindicating a certain liberty for the mystical spirit as against traditional Scholasticism; and in all these different spheres there were some who were deeply religious and some who, as experience showed, were soon to give up every semblance not merely of Christian but of even the vaguest Theistic faith. As soon as the Vatican hurled its thunderbolt they scattered and each went his own way; and not a few among them felt that the old authority was after all still the trustee of a synthesis of spiritual truths larger and deeper than their partial endeavours had been. But although the Modernist controversy was officially suppressed

within the Church, the impulse towards a greater interest in religious matters and a better appreciation of religion as an essential function of the human spirit has grown stronger and stronger.

Prezzolini's book, *The Whole War*, has revealed, through its collection of letters and fragments, an unsuspected wealth of really earnest, devoted heroic characters, who but for the war and their deaths would never have been known at all, and whose familiar or published writings are documents of a widespread exceptionally healthy family life, which is a real ground of hope for national life and lies deeply hidden beneath the Italy of which alone we hear through the sensationalism of the Press.

Two considerations must ever be kept in mind by those anxious to appreciate the difficulties confronting a free religious culture in Italy. Firstly, the Roman Catholic Church has been through centuries of national servitude and disunion the only living common Italian institution in which much even of Imperial Rome had survived. Many go so far as to say that Catholicism is the greatest historical achievement of the Italian people, the greatest self-expression of the essential balance of their eminently political and artistic mind, the least religious among all forms of Christian religion. Thus Catholicism is a constituent feature of the patriotism of many people who are not religious at all; and even many atheists would certainly prefer its organised and crystallised inertia to a new flicker of religious

life. Moreover, the Roman Catholic Church is heir to the Roman Empire in the sense that increasingly through the centuries it came near to becoming more a State than a Church; political and legal habits of mind prevailed more and more over purely religious instincts. Especially since the counter-Reformation, it fell more and more into the habit of supporting existing absolute monarchies and privileged classes against liberal tendencies, in order to prevent such Governments altering the *status quo* in a sense unfavourable to the existing monopolies of the Church itself. We are only at the beginning of a new historical era in which in Europe, as already in America, the Roman Church, no longer able to rely on Governments, will have to rely on peoples, to struggle in order to retain or reconquer their allegiance, and may even have to associate itself with other tendencies in defence of its own liberty against the absolutism of the Nationalist State. It may well be that in these new political and social world-conditions the Church will once more be increasingly driven to drop its still extant political features and recover its essential spiritual character. In this evolution it may come to acknowledge as allies many a cultural and social tendency which at present it denounces as inimical and subversive.

Secondly, the possibility of a really religious revival in Italian life and culture was so far precluded

not merely by the above-mentioned Modernist unpreparedness, but also and above all by widespread conviction that the whole development of modern culture culminates in Kantian and post-Kantian idealism which, as interpreted by Spaventa, Croce, and Gentile, afforded a way out of the necessity of choosing between naturalism, with its denial of the value of the spiritual life, and Christianity, with its transcendent Deity and the Roman Church as its infallible mouthpiece, enthroned in the capital of the kingdom. If the validity of the moral law and the dignity and freedom of the human spirit can with one blow be vindicated both against naturalism and against the most ancient and systematised tradition of Christian thought; if Religion itself can be shown to be only a stage in human culture; and if Man, *i.e.* the mind which constitutes our common humanity, can be shown to be identical with the Universal Reason that weaves the Worlds and to be just such Reason as self-conscious, surely we are on the right road not merely to overcome naturalistic superstition, but to found the religion of Man. Would not Italy, thereby, returning to her Humanism and her Renaissance tradition by vindicating for herself as a State the right to proclaim such a religion transcending both Protestantism and Catholicism, be the pioneer of a world-revolution in culture, the supreme "Copernican Revolution," by which Man is proclaimed the one possible God

for true and free men? Would not this be the new mission of Italy?

So long as this fundamental issue—the possibility of a purely humanistic, historical and secular life, culture and philosophy as against an essentially religious, transcendentist, Christian view of life—has not been thought and fought out in bitter earnest as the greatest issue of modern times; so long as it has not even been felt as a problem, there is no possibility of a deep and broad religious awakening, of an entire change of spirit in Italy, or, indeed, in any other nation. And while everywhere there are many obstacles to this issue becoming of capital importance, this is especially the case in a country that has just achieved its national unity; and even more so in a country like Italy, which is passing through a period of national self-intoxication, consequent upon one of the greatest victories that a race ever achieved against its traditional foe; a victory, moreover, scarcely expected, and won practically on the morrow of almost irretrievable disaster. It is far more likely that for nations as well as for individuals, at all times, such issues are uppermost in hours of severest ordeal and deepest humiliation.

Even so, Giovanni Papini's conversion to Catholicism is a witness to the truth of our analysis. His conversion is far from being an isolated case of conscience. It would be easy to mention many other such cases among present-day Italian

writers and artists. Papini's conversion is only more resounding because it found expression in his now world-renowned *Story of Christ*. Papini is representative of thousands and tens of thousands in having begun, even before the Great War, to feel the noisy and pretentious emptiness of so much of what we call modern civilisation, the inadequacy of mere scientific culture, the shallowness of purely philosophical dialectics, the meaninglessness of æsthetic *dilettantismo*, the futility of the passion for power. The war came to him as a great opportunity and now appears as a great calamity, as a revelation of the debasedness of mere humanity. Whether his conversion was more than a convulsion, whether his character has really been reshaped and reborn or has only changed the direction of his spites and kickings, time alone will show. But it is unquestionable that in turning not merely to Christianity, which he had scarcely known before, but to Roman Catholicism, he has not given way to a mere wave of weariness or disgust or to mere momentary spites. These may be real causes and ingredients, but they are subordinate to something far more important: to a deep-seated pity for the soul of man ensnared in its own evil doings and habits; a noble longing for its redemption from the superficial world of things and machinery, speed and comfort; a thirst for unity and communion transcending worldly causes of division among men; a real discovery of the

best in traditional Christianity; and a conviction that so far we have not found an alternative to this, and that it has survived the breakdown of the Mediæval Unity and may survive the breakdown of much Modernity. Papini is representative not so much in the way he solves the problem as in his acuteness and sharpness in feeling it and stating it, in his dissatisfaction with himself, and in his yearning for peace of soul. At moments he rises to an almost Augustinian sublimity: "All are in need of Thee, even those who know it not; and those who do not know it by far more than those who know. The hungry one fancies he hungers after bread, and instead he is hungry after Thee; the thirsty one thinks he wants water, and he thirsteth after Thee. The sick man desires health, and he knows not that his disease is the absence of Thee. He who is seeking beauty in the world, unknowingly is seeking Thee, the whole and perfect beauty. He who in thought pursues Truth, unwillingly longs for Thee, the one truth worth knowing; and he who panteth after peace, looks for Thee, the one peace wherein the most restless hearts may find repose. They call for Thee, unaware that they are calling for Thee, and their cry is unutterably more sorrowful than ours." After closing the *Story of Christ*, while the great last prayer, the prayer of the hopeless ones, still resounds in one's mind, one can hardly avoid thinking that if the world does

not recover from the Great War and we shall not eliminate the causes of it, we shall be precipitated once, or perhaps more than once, into the great hell fire. That great prayer may become the prayer of us all and Papini may only have been our great common forerunner.

The conversion of Papini is especially significant if we look at the characteristic evolution of the spirit of Italian literature as studied in its four greatest representatives since the formation of the Italian kingdom. Carducci's poetry and magnificent prose are echoes of two great rebellions: the patriotic rebellion and self-assertion of Italy against her foreign oppressors and, deeper and greater, the self-assertion of the Pagan Humanism of the Renaissance against Catholic tradition and asceticism; so that his world is neither broader nor deeper than that of the Latin lyricists and is fully unaware of any but visible and tangible plastic beauty; a self-assertion culminating in the apotheosis of Italy as the one new earthly Deity left for our worship. Paganism and Patriotism go hand in hand. D'Annunzio, Carducci's greatest disciple, is a poet of an immensely richer kind of self-assertion, of rebellion against any limit set to joy and power; he is, in a way, even more than Carducci, a Renaissance spirit. But his world too is a purely sensuous world in which there is no room for the world of the spirit such as Dante

knew and loved. Even when he dabbles with Christian mysticism he is merely enjoying and exploiting the external features of Catholicism and finding a niche for it in the æsthetic Pantheon of his soul. Still, these attempts in themselves, however cold and even morbid, are significant witnesses to a kind of subconscious awareness of the inadequacy of a purely human and æsthetic outlook for the human spirit as a whole. With Pascoli we are still within mere humanism, but within a humanism already not untouched by holy fears and sympathetic even towards traditional religion. It is the humanism of one who does not feel alien to anything human, even to faiths he cannot share. He may be on the threshold, but he is not within the gate of the kingdom. With Fogazzaro we are, it may be only for a moment, definitely within the gate. He witnesses to the reality and livingness of a part of the Italian soul which did not find utterance in the other three, and whose last great utterance had been Manzoni's. Papini's conversion, therefore, is at least on the line of a progress in the direction of a recovery of spiritual values in art and in life.

A milder, very different, but still very typical representative of this same dissatisfaction in face of and bewilderment in the present social and spiritual conditions of Italian life is Alfredo Panzini, one of the most entrancing Italian prose-writers, in whom some of the elegiacal spirit of his beloved

Tibullus seems to have come to a permanent and happy understanding with a healing and refreshing sense of humour. Panzini echoes the inner crisis of the new Italy emerging from traditional and patriarchal agriculture into all-reshaping commercialism and industrialism: the crisis of the new middle class partly derived from the townward rush of the sons of old small-owners' families. He is the outstanding interpreter of the divorce between the spiritually reposeful ideal of the old unquestioned faiths and customs, and the real, represented by the new, restless, often aimless and scattered social as well as individual life—an interpreter whose humour and whose satire rise sometimes to a perfect expression such as might be found in a fragment of a dialogue from Lucian. As in that short story where he fancies that an old professor of philosophy holding the ideas of Gentile is met, after his death, by a band of his former disciples and followers anxious to inform him that, after all, the anthropomorphic, long-bearded God he spent so many years in showing to be a mere projection of the human spirit was quite real and would soon pass judgment upon him; and where he escapes hell owing to the endless chains of *Ave Marie* said on his behalf by his aged mother! What is the new history of his country for Panzini but a new form of the eternal, everlasting mutual shout of classes and generations, "Go and let thy place be mine!" What are bour-

geois and proletarians but the same human nature unwearyingly striving after the same vulgar and passing satisfactions and victims of the same many-named and differently arranged illusions! There came once a real revolutionary, who preached renunciation and love and proclaimed the *ubi consistam* of life to be not on earth, but far, far away from it. They crucified Him and He has no followers. Therefore life is sadder than ever to any one who sees through its veil. And yet "there is too much sunshine for life ever to take shelter in darkness." Its emptiness frightens us; and yet we are even more afraid of the cold abysmal depths into which we would hurl ourselves by giving it up; yet a tale listened to at the old fireside, a good family dinner, a bottle of old wine, woods and streams still yield the accustomed charm. Thus, in every one of his books our author rides through the old country, and ever fresh and unreconciled there meet and fight in his heart the ideal (the good old time embodied in the ancient towers and steeples, in the historic walls, in the hills and plains over which so much history has raged and found its peace) and the real (the swarming to and fro of the classes and the masses, equally blind to the glorious beauty surrounding them, and equally heedless of the treasures that lay at their feet, and equally anxious for the best seats at the most vulgar banquets of life). His was the wonderful balance of an idyllic realist. The war and

even more the peace that was no peace have upset it, and so Panzini too has become a kind of heart-broken, sorrowfully bewildered humorist mirroring the bewilderment of the many and the cunning as well as the noisy strife of the leading conquerors of the opposing bands.

The present condition of Italian philosophical culture mirrors these conditions of present-day Italian life and mind. On one hand, purely naturalistic and positivist literature is completely out of fashion. On the other, within a common ground of idealistic premises, minds are divided for or against a purely immanentist, humanistic, historical view of life. The days in which Herbert Spencer among foreign thinkers and Roberto Ardigò among native ones seemed to enjoy an almost incontrovertible authority are gone for ever. Positivism in the sense of a philosophy taking up an agnostic or negative attitude towards metaphysics and religion, denying final causes, attempting to derive ideas and forms of thought from sense-experience and explaining the highest in reality in terms of the lower, viz. by the reduction of diversities to identities, etc., has lost its first and last and greatest Italian representative in Roberto Ardigò (1828–1920).

Positivism, of course, had forerunners in the Naturalistic thinkers of the Renaissance, especially Pomponnazzi and Telesio, and has roots in the

tradition that through Vico, Romagnosi, and Cattaneo comes down to Pasquale Villari (1827–1917), the great biographer of Savonarola and Machiavelli; but Ardigò was its greatest systematic exponent, an exponent characteristically independent of August Comte, Stuart Mill, and Herbert Spencer, and a forerunner of the main ideas of Avenarius and Mach. And Ardigò was also the last systematic exponent of Positivism not merely because no other thinker of the same School rose to an equally comprehensive and systematic outlook, but also because, for instance, through Troilo, Ranzoli and Tarozzi, Positivism reaches out to points which it shares with some forms of idealism, especially in regard to the theory of knowledge, the indeterminism of volitions and the objective, even transcendent, reality of values (Guido della Valle). Positivism survives now mainly as the pervading inspiration of many genetic studies in psychology, sociology, ethics, and education. Its most comprehensive organ is now the world-renowned review *Scientia*, dedicated to the co-ordination of scientific work all over the world, to specialised inquiries and to the criticism of scientific methods and theories. One of its founders, Eugenio Rignano, has mainly distinguished himself as the author of a remarkably brilliant theory on the transmission of acquired characters through heredity and on the basis of memory and of a study on the basis and

psychology of reasoning. Federico Enriques, besides being world-famous in the field of mathematics, is the great leader of a tendency termed *critical positivism*, more and more approximating to rationalism, intent upon vindicating the validity of science against pragmatism, Hegelian historicism, intuitionism, etc., and on founding such a vindication upon a psychogenetic study of science and scientific logic. The standard of truth is experiment, which reveals whether there is or not agreement between the subjective element of prevision and the objective element of reality, the immediate data of which, therefore, are not pure sensations, as old empiricism held, but the relations between certain conditions voluntarily established by ourselves and the sensations that follow: reality is just the system of unchanging relations between our questions and the answers we obtain. And as the relations among things are endless, so the process of scientific knowing is also endless. Both science and religion are seeking for permanency behind change; but while science assumes as standard of truth the verification of hypotheses through experiment and rational criticism, so as to make results independent of our desires and fears, religion assumes as standard of truth the harmony between the hypothesis and the ego's ideal of perfection. The strife is not between this or that scientific doctrine and this or that religious doctrine, but between the two outlooks and methods, each claiming full sovereignty over

our mind. But, on the one hand, religious intuition is not exclusively religious to the point of denying that if we could possess perfect knowledge we should find ultimate reality harmonious with our legitimate rational aspirations; on the other hand, even the scientist who is most anxious to keep free of subjective preoccupations about his own individual happiness or about human happiness and destiny in general, thereby exalts the value of truth for truth's sake to a truly religious height: science presupposes faith in the intrinsic value of science. And both are rooted in the human need for uniformity and constancy in our relations with the world, and both urge men towards an increased mastery of thought over sense-data. The conflict is not overcome through the discovery of the common root of the two opposite outlooks; but this discovery fosters the spirit of brotherliness among searchers in both fields and helps all to rise to the notion of human solidarity in space and time. As the reader will see better for himself in the chapters dedicated to the main pioneers of Italian contemporary philosophy, there is reason for thinking that Enriques has not yet probed the whole depth of the problem of knowledge. Once we have reached the point of recognising that both science and religion are rooted in the same not merely logical but also æsthetic, volitional and emotional nature of man, have we done all that is possible to explain and thereby to eliminate

the conflict at least in principle and to reduce it to that of a permanent revision and re-statement of categories? May we not say that while the scientific outlook and method give us true reality from the standpoint of what is common and necessary to men as social beings, in abstraction from their individual needs and reactions to the universe, the religious outlook and method are (as trustees of the sense of values and the worth of man as a whole, the trustees also of the value of that part of human nature which science for its purposes legitimately puts aside) the root of the need and worth of science itself? May we not say, therefore, that the religious standpoint is as valid as and even more inclusive than the purely scientific one? If so, the conflict would seem to arise only because each side is too prone to forget that man is greater than all his standpoints, and that the real problem is that of finding the standpoint of the whole man from which to judge of the validity of all partial subordinate views.

Thus from the inner development of Positivism itself at its best, from its fundamental inability to pass from explanations of how things are and happen to the consideration of values, of what is worth being and doing, problems arise which send us for their solution to quite different currents of thought. And so in Italy too, Naturalism was followed by an idealistic reaction at first as

a criticism of both Naturalism and traditional Idealism, and later by a bold and organic original construction. The reaction was a sweeping one.

The two inseparable names connected with this idealistic revival are those of Croce and Gentile. They are inseparable not merely because for a quarter of a century they have worked together, influencing each other's thoughts, but also because till very recently they were associated in their literary and philosophical activity. They began together their missionary philosophical enterprise through their review, *La Critica*, and by starting the publication of collections of Italian and foreign classics of thought, ancient and modern. Both are characterised by tireless energy in serious thinking, in austerely impartial and merciless criticism. But while in Croce the artist, the historian, the man as a whole prevails over the professional philosopher, the opposite is the case in regard to Gentile. Croce came to philosophy through problems of history, æsthetics, and economics. For him philosophy remains essentially criticism and methodology. Philosophy is for him just the theory of science or of some sciences, and should have nothing further to do with those supreme problems of metaphysics and religion, to which he denies any legitimate existence. For Gentile philosophy is, even in an emotional sense, the heir and substitute of religion, the religion of thought, the world's

self-consciousness speaking through the philosopher. With Croce the prevailing tendency is towards distinctions; in Gentile there is a real orgy of burning exaltation of Unity. Croce, who came to Spaventa and Hegel only under the influence of Gentile, and after having passed through Herbart and Vico, was the earlier of the two to bring himself to notice. His *Estetica* (1902) called the attention of the literary and artistic world to philosophy and schooled the Italian mind to a harder and stricter intellectual discipline. There is no living Italian literary or artistic critic who directly or indirectly is not vitally indebted to Croce: Prezzolini, Borgese, Cecchi, Gargiullo, Momigliano, Russo are excellent instances of more or less independent development of Crocian æsthetic criticism.

The new Italian literature as a whole and its dominant character, its impressionism, find their explanation, whether avowed or not, in Croce's Æsthetics. Once Beauty is defined as expression, as form, independently of any consideration of matter or content; once it is established that what matters is the single work of art taken as a world in itself, and that in each masterpiece we must look for those elements or parts alone in which intuition is in its supreme condition of purity and spontaneity, undiluted expression, why should the artist labour after completeness in his poems, novels or pictures or tunes, why should he not pause when inspirations stop? Hence

the fashion for "fragments," the splendid *fragmentism* of Ardengo Soffici and of Papini, especially in *Giorni di festa* and *Il Tragico Quotidiano*; hence the anti-traditional, uncanalised, uncontrolled character of the new lyrical poetry, where the enduring empirical personality of the artist is lost sight of in the consideration of the succession of his lyrical moments and visions, as in Govoni, Gozzano, Corazzini, Palazzeschi.

Gentile, on the contrary, is in a direct line with Hegel, Fichte, and Kant through Bernardo Spaventa and looks on Art, History, Politics from the standpoint of Philosophy. For him the philosopher himself is creator of reality: within the philosopher's mind more than anywhere else the world's mind is focussed and lives; hence a certain fierceness and fanaticism in his utterances which stand in remarkable contrast with the Socratic, ironic balance and serenity of Croce.

Gentile's philosophy too leads to a special conception of Art. If the truth of a certain thought of mine or the goodness of a certain deed of mine consists merely in its being actually thought and done and then disappears the moment it ceases to be an *act* and becomes a *fact* belonging to the world of objects which I contemplate; and if we cannot, with Croce, keep the artist apart from man as a whole (for life is at once art and philosophy, theory and praxis in every one of its moments), then each work of art, just as each moment of life, is its own judge

and its own philosophy, and thus we are in the realm of absolute relativity. This standpoint of absolute relativity in life not less than in art finds its expression in the dramas of Luigi Pirandello. Neither Art, however, nor life, can afford to remain for long in questioning or wondering attitudes. Even from shocks there is recovery either by accepting and affirming life as a many-sided, even a contradictory and bewildering adventure to be got through and enjoyed as best it may, or else accept the aid of Myth, which lifts us above life's bewildering many-sidedness and emptiness by the aid of æsthetic contemplation and *rêverie*. In Pirandello's Art this shock remains an interior crisis. In lesser dramatists—the so-called *grotteschi*—it becomes a real orgy of would-be elegant, more or less acrid scepticism, wallowing in the essential farcicalness of life, treating life as a gamble devoid of moral significance, its gamble-like morality—obviously the moral attitude of a post-war society of parvenus without culture and without traditions or faiths or loyalties. Or, as was the case with Luigi Ercole Morselli—a sort of Italian Keats, altogether ignorant of Greek and yet a thoroughly Hellenic spirit and, like his English kindred spirit, prematurely passed to eternity and immortality—the pathos of the shock finds escape and relief in a new form of drama, a drama whose characters are taken mainly from the Greek Olympians and made into the vehicles of the author's detachment from

life and its illusions, of his awareness of life's essential meaninglessness, his fond glancing backward towards those very illusions, his serene and slightly ironic, pessimistic attitude, and his somewhat sweetly melancholy joy in transforming the illusions of which he is free into objects of contemplation. In *Orione and Glauco* dramatic art passes into lyricism of a very high order and seems at times on the point of bursting into symphony or choral song.

Through the instrumentality of Croce and Gentile, through their examples even more than through the ever-increasing volume of their work, a new generation has been, and is still being, trained in literary, historical and philosophical thinking, which by means of this very thinking is becoming more and more aware that neither individuals nor nations are mere tools of cosmic, economic or human necessities; that the truth of necessity is freedom; that man, as spirit, always carries his freedom and destiny within himself; that, through making nature and history the objects of our thinking, we break their spell, we make them ours, we rise above them and begin life anew. In this feeling of restored initiative and freedom, in this opening of new horizons to the Italian mind, in this revelation of a possible new mission for Italy and Italian culture, of a mission of deliverance both from materialism and from supernaturalism and ecclesiasticism, and of

faith in the divinity of man, more than in their systematic philosophies, is to be sought the key to the great success of Croce and Gentile in making their countrymen—and not them alone—so conspicuously their debtors.

And yet their systematic philosophy is not only their most characteristic and enduring work; it is also the most characteristic contribution of contemporary Italy to the mind of the present-day world: perhaps the most radical and logically thorough statement of the implicit tendencies pervading modern thinking. Croce and Gentile claim that they are heirs of all the best thought of all the ages; that they are in a special way drawing the logical consequences of all modern philosophical speculation from Descartes and Spinoza to our day; that through them Platonism, Christianity, Religion itself are receiving the final death-stroke; that through them Italy, in undermining and overcoming Catholic culture at its best, is the pioneer of a revolution which sooner or later will become universal and will initiate the Kingdom of Man and the Religion of Thought. They claim that in their philosophy the peculiar genius of the Italian people is once more coming of age. It is, therefore, to their systematic philosophy that we must dedicate the greater part of our book, especially because their idealism, far from being metaphysical and statical as English and American idealism has hitherto been, is resolutely anti-

metaphysical and mainly historical. And since their philosophy has already attracted and provoked a fair amount of penetrating and, in our view, decisive Italian criticism, in following the lines of such criticism we shall be making the English reader further intimately acquainted with the already dawning tendencies of the anti-Hegelian reaction.

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGINS OF ITALIAN NEO-IDEALISM

Summary.—Historical roots and character of Italian philosophy—Naïve realism and scientific realism in the history of philosophic thought and the origin of modern science—The bifurcation between the world of mind and that of matter thus engendered renders inevitable the representationist theory of knowledge and sooner or later a purely subjectivist view of knowing, whether we are empiricists or intellectualists—The meaning of Kant and post-Kantian idealism—The supreme problem of philosophy is to determine the nature of mind—Concept the instrument of philosophy—The abstract and the concrete universal—The dialectic of the distincts and that of the opposites—The error of Hegel, and the cause of his unbridged dualism and residual transcendentalism and Platonism—Croce's correction and Croce's conception of the system and process of spirit—The second root of Italian Neo-Idealism, and especially of Croce's Æsthetics: Art as the basis of knowledge and the first, not the last and highest form of experience—Vico as the chief forerunner of Croce—*Deus in nobis et nos.*

SOUTHERN Italy, since the days of old Empedocles, has ever been fertile in powerful philosophical intellects. It gave to the world Aquinas, by far the greatest of all mediæval thinkers; and later on Bernardino Telesio, Giordano Bruno, Tommaso Campanella, Icilio Vanini, all among the most brilliant Renaissance philosophers, sprang, so to say, from its soil, and, in still more recent times, Giambattista, Vico, Bertrando Spaventa, Francesco de

Sanctis, the immediate forerunners and spiritual inspirers of Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile, have all been Southern Italians. And there is one common tendency, due to a great extent perhaps to climate and scenery as well as to memories of Spanish domination and ecclesiastical oppression, which run more or less through them all, at least from the Renaissance to our own day : a humanistic reaction against religious orthodoxy, which has easily passed into aversion from every philosophical doctrine acknowledging the existence of transcendent realities, and has inspired and still inspires the boldest efforts to resolve the whole of being into the stream of human historical experience, to see in man the supremest self-disclosure of the nature of the Universe, the eye by which " the Universe beholds itself and knows itself divine," the " heart of hearts," where the Universe celebrates its eternal freedom at once apart from mere nature and from transcendent Gods.

It is indeed no exaggeration to say that Italian Neo-Idealism is not only the most recent, but also the most systematic formulation of the essentially anti-metaphysical and purely humanistic spirit underlying modern philosophical speculation. More than this : its own most insistent claim is that of being the coming to explicit self-consciousness of the fundamental implications more or less dormant in every other philosophical tendency, controlling the succession and mutual interaction of all the

other systems from Descartes onward, and constituting the very spirit of modern culture as a whole; and, consequently, it stands out as the refutation of all "Platonism," explicit or latent, characteristic of philosophy since the days of Thales to our own.

In ordinary life, when we look around us we assume instinctively that our senses and our thought, in spite of many errors, which they themselves enable us to detect and correct, seize, in proportion to our ability in using them, the real characters of things: *i.e.* we assume instinctively that there are real things, accessible to our knowledge, existing as we know them to exist, quite independently of the acts by which we know them. It is in this stage of *naïve realism* that we discriminate between ourselves and things which are not ourselves, and between *things* or *substances*, characterised by their most usual, constant and practically useful qualities, and their *accidents* and activities. Thus do we build up the so-called world of external nature. Science, which for a long time lived in a condition of undifferentiation from philosophy, is only a derivation of this ordinary purely practical way of looking at things; each science is only a more systematic knowledge, a less fragmentary and more unified description and classification of certain sets of phenomena provisionally considered as isolated from everything else; and therefore science, though in a less naïve manner,

shares the realistic implications of the plain man's conception of knowledge. It may not believe that colours and experiences of heat and cold exist as such in things; but it believes that there are realities, which exist whether we know them or not; and whose action upon us is necessary to explain our knowledge of them. The world as given to us by science is merely the ordinary world considered only in its most constant, universal and describable characters; that is to say, in those aspects which lend themselves to measurement. It is the world in abstraction from those characters or aspects which, in contrast to the former ones, appear less constant, uniform, measurable, hence less objective and more subjective. Goethe said once that man will never know the extent to which our practical preoccupations prompt us to identify the essential with the universally useful, the describable and the measurable. We have only just begun to surmise how anthropomorphic the world of science itself is when studied in its psychological and historical growth. Naturalism and materialism are in truth philosophies which attempt to explain the world, and especially the whole man, in the light of a science of nature, which has all along been a daughter of the spirit of man, born of his practical and social needs. These two are the work of philosophers who, though living in the nineteenth or even the twentieth century, have not yet, as philosophers, reached the level of an Anaxagoras or of a Socrates.

This consideration brings us to see that, though philosophy may for a long time have lived in a condition of undifferentiation from what to-day we are accustomed to call science, yet it began to exist as something above mere science only from the moment when it became aware of the fact of mind and, with Socrates, made knowledge the first object of its inquiry. Since that moment philosophy has been busy trying to understand how the world, as given by the senses, the world of the changeable (which, as changeable, came to be thought of, owing to the practicality underlying the working of our mind, as less real, as merely apparent), stands to the unchangeable world, the world of essences and substances, given us by our capacity for framing concepts; the world which, as unchangeable, was supposed to be the *real* world, the more so as only in the light of it did the sensible changeable world seem to become intelligible and manageable. We know that Greek philosophy failed to solve the problem: it ended in the affirmation of an Absolute which is merely the emptiest abstraction of Being, the One beyond all differences, devoid of both will or intelligence, yet from which Philosophy asserts the origin by emanation of all our finite and concrete world itself as contrasted with the absolute, mere unreal appearance! It ended in proclaiming *ecstasis* (by whom and in whom) the gate to the oneness of Man and God, but as the Absolute is merely an abstraction and, by definition, the only real, and as Man and all

finite things are, as such, only appearances, what is ecstasis but the suicide of knowledge? Nor was the problem solved by Mediæval Philosophy, by Scholasticism; for Scholasticism as a philosophy accepts the Platonic and Aristotelian view of knowledge, as a dialectical ascent, by means of abstraction, to the unchangeable and only Real. Logically, it would end where Neo-Platonism ended, but for Christian experience, the experience and dogma of Incarnation, *i.e.* the unity of God and Man, of sensible and ideal reality, an experience which it tries vainly to interpret by means of the categories of pre-Christian thought. And thus the problem confronts us unsolved in a new form at the beginning of the modern era, when the discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo, the discoveries of new worlds and new continents, the creation of new sciences and new methods by Newton, Descartes, and Leibnitz, shake to its foundations the Ptolemaic cosmology, the geocentric character of which fitted so well into the anthropocentric outlook of Biblical tradition and of Mediæval Church doctrine, and lead to a critical or even sceptical attitude towards the great massive structure of Scholastic philosophy.

Now the building up of modern science, especially of physico-mathematical science, was rendered possible by the assumption that we need not consider as really objective in external nature any qualities but those which Locke called primary, the qualities apprehended by both touch and sight, viz.

extension, shape, and motion—the mechanical properties by which bodies influence one another; and that conceptual thought alone, working on such primary qualities through the concepts of space, number, motion, substance, and causality, is adequate to the task of achieving knowledge of Nature and of God; while the secondary qualities, *i.e.* the qualities apprehended only by a single sense (colours, savours, sounds, smells, heat, and cold), were deemed to be only obscure and confused feelings, sources of illusory and deceptive experiences, or only useful as instruments of protection and defence for our bodies, to which the finite mind is delivered over owing to its present connection with the brain.

All sensible qualities, which in traditional Aristotelian physics were considered as objectively real qualitative changes—as when hot bodies become cold—but which appeared no longer necessary for the purposes of physical explanation and seemed to be explicable in terms of the motions and dispositions of material particles, came naturally to be regarded as purely subjective, *i.e.* as states of mind caused by external and purely mechanical qualities; everything which the new physics could conveniently ignore from its specific standpoint and for its purpose came to be thought as objectively unreal and therefore as merely psychical. The modern bifurcation between the psychical world, comprehending all secondary qualities and the physical world comprehending all entities with purely

mechanical properties, sprang from these methodological requirements of modern physics in its infancy. More than that, these two worlds came to confront each other not merely as characterised by opposite predicates—extension and inextension—but also as characterised by the fact that while in the physical world creation and destruction of matter and energy are inconceivable, in the psychical world the creation and the passing into nothingness of qualities and experiences are the rule! Strictly speaking, in the physical world there is no room for real novelties; while in the world of mind even the old, in being remembered, is created anew. Struck with wonder at the success of their new method, Descartes and his successors sacrificed imagination and beauty, art and poetry to the glory of reason and physico-mathematics.

But it did not take long to discover—and this was the work of English philosophy from Locke to Hume—that the so-called primary qualities of matter are not intrinsically more objective than the secondary qualities; that size, shape, motion are highly complicated experiences having a history in our minds and having, as their external causes and stimuli, entities radically different from them. From this the conclusion was drawn that the physical and physiological processes which condition sensations and perceptions must be instrumental to the bringing into existence of a " representation " of the external material entity, which, as such, is inaccessible to

us; that the mind of each of us is incapable of directly experiencing anything non-mental; and that none of us can even transcend his own private consciousness. We know things only in the shadowy forms of mental duplicates. Nor was this all. If we accept the sensationalist theory that even ideas, even the most basic conceptions of our thought, are only the result of customary association of past sensory experiences and feelings, on what ground shall we ever justify our going at all beyond our own private consciousness and postulating external causes or stimuli of our experience? And even if, with Kant, we reject such a theory and hold that the world of our experience is not a world of mere sense-experience, but a world of sense, illumined and interpreted by intellectual conceptions, on what grounds shall we ever assume that our categories, *i.e.* the categories of cause and substance, are valid as between our perceptions and their eventual external causes? On what grounds shall we ever justify our assumption that anything exists beyond our experience? On what grounds shall we feel sure that we are not adding to reality and thus misrepresenting it?

By now we are at the gates of modern idealism. Kant may have looked on Hume through Leibnitz's eyes and on Leibnitz through the eyes of Hume; and the sensationalist and the rationalist currents of modern philosophy from Descartes onward may have again met and interpenetrated each

other. But he inherited from both sides, on the one hand the subjectivism inherent in Descartes' formula, *Cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am), a subjectivism which logically leaves no room for any reality beyond the moment and act of experience, and on the other hand he inherited the admission of realities, (be they physical nature or God) transcending such an act and moment as causes or occasions thereof. And this dualism between thought and reality remains in him as unbridgeable as before, thereby begetting ever new forms of scepticism.

Post-Kantian idealism in its several stages, represented by Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, is a titanic endeavour to overcome this dualism which is fatal to the cause of the objectivity of knowledge. The great discovery of Kant had been the *a priori* synthesis, the act by which the Transcendental Ego, *i.e.* the logical subject of every possible experience, that, existing only by such an act, thinks and, by thus bringing together in thought, creates the terms of any given experience as well as the synthesis by which alone they are real and intelligible : such terms being the *sense-intuition* which by itself would be blind and the concept which by itself would be empty. Neither exists apart from the other before such an act ; each exists only with and through the other in virtue of the *I think* of the Transcendental Ego. Now, if it were true that sense-intuition by itself is blind, why should there be any sense-intuition at all ? How could it give rise to concepts interpreting it ?

Hence the successors of Kant, especially Fichte and Hegel, drew the strictly logical conclusion that the mind does not receive anything from without, but creates everything from within; and that the phenomenal world is not a veiling appearance between our mind and the real, the noumenal world transcending it, but rather the real world itself, as self-revealing at its different levels. Knowledge is objectively valid, *i.e.* man is capable of knowing the world as it really is because in him the world knows itself, because his mind is universal mind knowing in him the world which it has made and is eternally making. Mind knows Nature because she is flesh of its own flesh. Consequently the laws of mind, the laws of logical thought, will also be the laws of the process of reality, especially of reality in its concretest forms, viz. dialectic ceases to be, as it was in Plato, merely the hierarchy of notions by which the finite mind rises to the knowledge of an already existing perfect system of forms finding their ground and completion in the Absolute. It becomes an active, creative dialectic, a methodology of creation, history itself.

The supreme problem of philosophy will therefore be that of determining the essential nature of mind and of the process by which it lives and grows. If such a problem had been satisfactorily resolved by Hegel, the ideal of a purely immanental philosophy, *i.e.* of a philosophy for which nothing exists save that which is demonstrably *mind-begotten* and *mind-*

illumined and draws its reality from the act by which mind creates it and knows, would already have been realised. As a matter of fact it was not so, and to understand why and how it was not so is to understand the genesis of modern Italian neo-idealism.

Now the problem of determining the essential nature of mind and of reality and of their process resolves itself into that of determining what are the specific methods and organs of philosophy, as a science of the *whole*, as distinct from the methods and organs of empirical and mathematical science, of Art, of Ethics, etc. As these sciences, so to speak, select their own fields and methods and even, as in mathematics, command them, while philosophy cannot admit any presupposition or take anything for granted (*i.e.* it must endow all its assertions with the form of truth), philosophical thinking can only be thinking by concepts, and philosophy can only be a system of concepts. But we must be clear as to what we mean by a concept. The concept which grasps reality as a whole cannot be the mere sum of the predicates common to members of a given class of entities called by the same name, as is the case with the concepts of the natural sciences, which therefore are concrete without being universal; nor can it be the abstract concept of the mathematical sciences which are universal without being concrete. In either case there is something given or assumed, something which deprives any system of such psuedo-concepts of thoroughgoing transparency,

i.e. of the feature of necessity. The concept which aims at being not a mere sign or a type or an intellectual fiction, but the living soul of reality, far from being the mere sum of the common predicates of many entities, is the system or organism of the essential predicates of one subject; it does not exclude but includes distinctions and oppositions; it *is* its distinctions and oppositions; its life is their living each in and through the others.[1]

An example of a concrete universal, a philosophical concept as a unity of distincts is, for instance, in Croce's theory, spirit as a unity of imagination and intellect. Spirit is not a mere genus of which imagination and intellect could be considered as two species, each having a life of its own utterly unrelated to the other; spirit *is* imagination *and* intellect; it is their organism; it lives in them; they are *its* life; they are *it*. But the unity of distincts is not the only form of a concrete universal. There are also philosophical concepts which are unities of opposites. Throughout the whole history of philosophy we find thinkers struck by contrasting and even contradictory aspects of experience; goodness and badness, beauty and ugliness, truth and falsehood, worth and worthlessness, unity and multiplicity; and engaged in trying to overcome these contradictions, some by reducing one term of the opposition to the other to the extent of losing

[1] See Bosanquet's admirable chapter on the Concrete Universal in *The Principle of Individuality and Value*.

sight of differences, and others, in reaction thereto, reasserting differences and losing sight of unity; each standpoint passing almost inadvertently into the opposite one. Now it was by reflecting on this history of oppositions within the human mind that Hegel came to his great fundamental discovery: the discovery that unity is as real as opposition, and that opposition or contradiction is not real as against unity, but only as between the opposites within that unity; *i.e.* that each of the opposites taken by itself is only an abstraction; and is real only in its unity with the other opposite. The contradiction is only apparent, and is overcome as soon as we see that the two opposites belong to a higher unity which includes both. The classical instance of a concrete universal as a synthesis of opposites is the notion of Becoming, the first concrete one in Hegel's dialectic, the synthesis of Being and Not-Being. At first it may seem that Being is the simplest and most positive predicate conceivable about a thing, nay, the simplest primordial reality fully capable of standing by itself. But what difference, asks Hegel, is there really between pure, undetermined Being, Being which is not that of any particular entity, and nothing? And the same can be said of *Not-Being*. We can say that something *is not* something else; but a Not-Being, which is not the *Not-Being* of anything in particular, in what does it differ from Being? And yet Being and Not-Being, which in themselves are mere abstractions, are fully real if seen one in

the other as elements in that concrete notion which is Becoming, which is at once *ceasing to be* and *ceasing not to be*. Similarly, true and false have no meaning each apart from the other: a truth taken apart from its opposite is a truth which has not been thought, *i.e.* it is not a truth; for truth is the overcoming of untruth in thought. And in the same manner goodness and evil are not sheer alien opposites; goodness and evil exist and have meaning only in the act of will by which evil is being overcome. The Hegelian dialectic is just this process of progressive correction of abstractions, at each stage of which a seeming contradiction between a positive notion (thesis) and its opposite (antithesis) is shown to arise only from taking each apart from the unity in which it lives in and through the other: a process the spring of which is the contradiction which reality, *qua* Becoming, carries in its own bosom: a process which is at once the process of thought and that of the world—the method of philosophy and of history.

The essential deficiency of Hegel's dialectic, as Croce shows, springs from his ignoring of the essential difference between the nexus of distincts and that of opposites in the philosophical concept. In the case of the concrete universal, which is a unity of distincts, *i.e.* in the case of spirit conceived as the unity of imagination and intellect, the concept of Imagination (or of Art, Poetry, Knowledge of particulars) is at the same time *one with* and *distinct*

from the higher, the logical concept of Philosophy, in the sense that while Imagination and Art can do without philosophical concepts, Philosophy cannot do without Art and Imagination. While Art does not exclude Philosophy, Philosophy presupposes and includes Art; that is to say, in the concrete universal, which is a unity of distincts, these stand to each other as two degrees of reality, of which the lower is the foundation of the higher, but can stand quite apart from it.

On the contrary, in the case of the concrete universal which is a unity of opposites, the two elements or moments of the synthesis are not, each taken separately, concretes but abstractions, and only the unity is a real concrete notion. In the case of the distincts, *i.e.* in the transition from Art to Philosophy, the lower degree loses its independence, but is preserved as dependent within the higher; while in the case of the opposites, their being preserved is only metaphorical since they never have any distinct reality. In the first case there is *real* process; in the second case there is none—there is only a process of subjective analysis and correction of abstractions. In the first case, in passing from Art to Philosophy, there is no contradiction which drives from one to the other degree of theoretic activity. Spirit passes from intuition to concept, from Art to Philosophy and vice versa, not because there is any contradiction in Art as such or in Philosophy as such, but because the human mind,

being intrinsically process and carrying within its own bosom the contradiction of Becoming, has it in its eternal nature to be Art *and* Philosophy, Theory *and* Praxis, and to be passing from the one to the other and vice versa. If there were any contradiction within Art or Philosophy, Theory or Praxis as such, it would never be possible to go back again to any of them; as in reality it is always the case.

The historical crises of Hegelian philosophy are all traceable, Croce shows, to the fundamental defect in its dialectic, which springs from Hegel having overlooked these deep and essential differences between the nexus of the distincts and the nexus of the opposites within the concrete universal. For if once we grasp with Hegel the fact that there are distincts standing in the relation of lower to higher degree such as we saw to exist between Art and Philosophy—a relation expressed by a dyad—and that there are opposites united in a nexus expressed by a triad; and if we again with him overlook that the dyad is a unity of real concretes, while the triad is a unity of elements each of which apart from the other is a mere abstraction, nothing stands against conceiving the distincts as opposites and the opposites as distincts.

And the consequences of this identification will be very serious indeed. For if we conceive the opposites as distincts, those concepts which taken by themselves are philosophical errors, abstractions, falsehoods, will be raised to the dignity of partial

concepts, *i.e.* of partial truths. For instance, *Being* and *Not-Being*, which in themselves, as against *Becoming*, are mere abstractions, will become *two degrees*, in the same relation towards *becoming* as *Art* and *Philosophy* towards theoretical activity. Abstractions will acquire the dignity of particular or partial realities. And the process of dialectical transition from pure indeterminate Being to the Absolute Idea—a process which in itself should be only a logical process of progressive correction of abstractions till the supreme and only reality, the Concrete Universal in which all opposites are preserved and reconciled, is at last reached in the absolute Idea—will assume the character of a real living process from the barest to the richest form of existence. The supreme and most famous example of consequences following from this confusion is Hegel's attempt to overcome the dualism between Nature and Spirit, which he conceives not as two opposites, not therefore as two abstractions apart from the Logos, but as two concrete and qualitatively distinct realities, by means of the Logos, *i.e.* God as existing in His eternal essence before the creation of the world. If Nature and Spirit are concrete distincts, their nexus can only be the dyadic nexus of Nature as presupposed by Spirit transcending it. If they are treated as a triad together with the Logos, then, as opposites, they should be mere abstractions and the Logos should be the only Real.

Not less fatal will be the consequences following from conceiving the distincts as opposites. We shall be led to the denial of any specific reality to Art, Science, History, Ethics, Religion, etc., *i.e.* to all forms of experience which are not philosophy. Partial truths will be considered as philosophical errors, whose overcoming is philosophy. And whether we conceive the opposites as distincts or the distincts as opposites we shall land in Panlogism, *i.e.* in thinking that the process of mind is a process *away from* such pseudo-sciences and moving *towards* the only non-illusory form of knowledge, the dialectically achieved concrete universal, the philosophical concept.

From this dialectical Panlogism inexorably follows the unbridged dualism vitiating the whole Hegelian philosophy. If we conceive Becoming as a synthesis of opposites, then the Absolute, as the supreme synthesis, would also be the only reality and will be a purely statical Absolute; there will be no process. On the other hand, if we conceive Becoming as a real process from indeterminate Being to the Absolute, it will be a *progressus ad finitum* towards the Absolute in which all process would cease and become useless. In either case Being and Becoming still confront each other as two opposites. And this failure to overcome dualism is further deepened by the circumstance that Hegel had a more or less clear insight into the prevailingly practical and empirical notions of the

sciences of Nature, to the extent of speaking of them sometimes as intellectual fictions; yet he never succeeded in altogether denying to them all philosophical value, and even tried to exhibit Nature as a more or less petrified dialectical structure qualitatively different from Spirit. He therefore never reached the standpoint from which Nature, as given to us by physicists, mathematicians, and naturalists, appears as a highly practical and intellectual construction having as its purpose the exact description and measurement of reality to the end of its full mastery by man. And therefore Nature remained for Hegel, together with finite Spirit, a distinct reality which could only be understood in its unity with and distinction from Spirit through a supposed common derivation of both from the creative Logos, a Logos which, as we saw, is in flat contradiction with the spirit and purpose whether of the dialectic of the distincts or of that of the opposites, and amounts to nothing else but a sheer *Deus ex machina*.

It escaped Hegel's attention that though the synthesis of the distincts and the synthesis of the opposites are two quite irreducible realities, yet they can be so mediated as to make possible the notion of the perfect unity of spirit. Though the distincts (*i.e.* beauty and truth, utility and goodness, etc.) are not opposites, yet each distinct is a synthesis of opposites, is affirmation and negation, Being and Not-Being. Beauty is such because it has ugliness within itself; truth because it includes

falsehood; goodness because it includes evil. Without the negative term even the positive term disappears. Opposition is within each of the distincts because it is the general nature of reality, *i.e.* of mind. Mind cannot affirm without denying, cannot deny without affirming; and cannot either affirm or deny without distinctions, as activity is distinction; nor can it make distinctions without at the same time affirming their unity. "The organism," says Croce, "is the struggle of life against death; but the members of the organism are not struggling against each other; the hand is not struggling against the foot, nor the eye against the hand." A given whole is a whole only in so far as it is a whole of parts and *is* parts; an organism is such as having or rather as *being* organs and functions; a unity is such as *being* its determinations, and the determinations are thinkable only in their unity. Spirit *is* the unity of its determinations or distinctions, in each of which it actively affirms itself as against the corresponding inactivity, *i.e.* as beauty against ugliness, as truth against falsehood, and triumphing over it. It *is* the unity of theoretical and practical activity, as each of these realises itself as the unity of Art and Notion, of individual and universal good. The *Real* is not therefore the *Rational*, the purely conceptual Logos, but Spirit as intuition and concept, individual and universal will. And Spirit is not outside Nature; it has Nature within itself; Nature is merely the abstraction of the negative or

passive element within the unity of each form or degree of experience—the abstraction of the negative as against the positive. If, for instance, we abstract from the teleological character of experience as a whole we have Nature as a mechanical system; if we abstract from life we have an organism as a mere *dead* body. Just as a hand taken apart from a living organism is no longer a real hand as when it works within it, so Nature taken apart from Spirit is no longer a reality. The split of Hegelianism into a right wing, clinging to the unresolved element of transcendence and dualism and interpreting Hegel in an orthodox theistic sense, and into a left wing, denying any transcendence and exalting man as the highest self-disclosure of the ultimate reality and the point where such a reality may say with Shelley's Apollo—

> "I am the eye
> By which the universe beholds itself
> And knows itself divine"

is, Croce conclusively shows, traceable to this fundamentally defective mediation between the dialectic of the distincts and that of the opposites. But was this failure the only root of the failure of the Hegelian philosophy to carry out the monistic programme which is undoubtedly its driving spirit?

This question brings us to the second and minor source of Italian Neo-Idealism. We have already seen how Descartes and his successors, wonder-

struck at the success of their new methods, sacrificed the whole world of sensible qualities, of Art and Poetry, to the glory of Physico-mathematics and of Reason and landed us in the modern bifurcation of Spirit and Nature. Now, in process of time, as we have already seen, the so-called primary qualities of matter were shown to be not less subjective than the secondary ones, and the problem arose as to how mind can at all become aware of things which reason seemed to show to be utterly different from the sensations and images which they produce in us; a problem which was not at all solved by Kant claiming that Knowledge arises from the *a priori* synthesis of the concept, in itself empty, with sense-given intuition, in itself blind; and which, if such a Kantian solution were accepted, would drive us to the conclusion that sensation is not merely blind but useless. The whole post-Kantian idealism suffered from this radical inability to account for sensation and for the fact that sensation is, without the least possible doubt, the first step in the process of Knowledge. The choice seemed to lie between either some form of transcendence or dualism, which appeared to be *a priori* inadmissible; or to take sensation as useless and unintelligible. If sensation cannot be Knowledge of anything external, what can it be? Croce thinks the answer is in Vico's theory that Imagination or Art, far from being the highest blossom of the theoretic life, is its root; that while Imagination or Art can stand by itself, Intellect

(history, science, philosophy) presupposes it, even though transcending it, as its content and raw material; that while an artist need not be a philosopher, a philosopher, in order to express himself, must to some extent be an artist. That is to say, the first and lowest degree of the theoretic life is purely lyrical intuition; it has nothing to do with abstractions or classifications of objects; it cares not whether they are real or merely possible; it is mere creation of images, spirit as imagination. Art arises in each of us, when experience in the shape of practical activity (will, desire, emotion as such), *i.e.* in a shape which spirit as theoretical cannot seize in itself, becomes theoretically *seizable* by assuming, so to speak, *form;* when the content of past personal experience assumes the only possible form giving it utterance; or, rather, ceases to be mere content and grows into form, into a form which is its very self-utterance and meaning.

Another famous principle of Vico, which in a way is almost a corollary to this conception of Art as the first degree of theoretic Activity, is the one according to which, while Nature can only be understood by God who created it, the human world, as the creation of the human mind, is thoroughly intelligible by man; *i.e.* spirit knows that of which spirit is the maker. We need only keep present the purely practical abstract character of our conception of Nature, and Vico's dualism of the human and the divine mind collapses under the criticism that under-

mined the same dualism in Hegel, while at the same time the conception of the spirit as intuitive, evolving from itself the matter for spirit as conceptual activity, removes the necessity of accounting for sensation as knowledge. Mere sensation belongs, together with emotions, impulses, and desires, to that in the spirit's life which has not yet found expression and has not yet become an object to itself. And as such, in respect of the theoretic and æsthetic activity, it may well be defined as mere matter. Once this is granted, nothing more stands against our conceiving Spirit as a thoroughly self-determining cyclic impersonal activity realising itself in the two alternating forms of Theory and Praxis. Theory, *i.e.* Spirit as knowing, moves always from the intuition of the particular to the conception of the concrete universal; and Praxis, *i.e.* action, moves ever from the volition of the individually useful to that of the universally good. Praxis ever provides Art and Knowledge with new material for expression, and Philosophy and Theory ever provide Praxis with a new groundwork for creating deeds, and so on *ad infinitum* through an historical process in which the system of the ever recurrent forms and degrees of experience is cyclical, but in which the content admits of indefinitely progressive enrichment. Hence there is no longer any need of a beginning or of an end for the historical process, nor any need of an initial or final concept for Philosophy. We need not start the process of Mind towards Philosophy from Art rather

than from Ethics or Economics; each of these, duly thought out, leads to each of the others in its respective place in the eternal cycle of possible interarticulated forms of experience. Nor, finally, is there any necessity for all forms and degrees of experience to be dialecticised and so to lose themselves and die in Philosophy as the supreme synthesis, as in Hegel's Panlogism: Spirit is still the only and the whole reality; but Spirit is not merely Logic or Philosophy. Once we conceive Art as the first and lowest degree of theoretic Activity, as the point in the cyclic activity of spirit, where the formless matter of experience, *i.e.* previous practical experience, finds individual expression, there is no longer any necessity for invoking anything from outside to keep moving the process of mind. Spirit is wholly sufficient unto itself and fully self-determining. Not only does it not need, it cannot admit or take notice of aught but itself. Each moment or form of experience is always both first and last; it is matter in respect of the next moment and form in respect of the previous one. The relation of transcendence is made to hold not between finite spirit and external realities, be they Nature or God, but between forms and degrees of spirit as such. Religion is thus, even more than in Hegel, resolved into a *philosophia inferior*, a hybrid form born of Art and Ethics, a mythological, sensuous representation of that ultimate reality of Spirit, the truth of which, as given by Philosophy in a conceptual form, is

destined to supersede any dualism of God and Man, of Nature and Supernature, of History and Eternity, and finds its motto in *Deus in nobis et nos*.

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CHAPTER III

THE HISTORICAL IDEALISM OF BENEDETTO CROCE

Summary.—The forms of experience, their degrees, the order of their implication and the cyclical activity of Spirit as a whole —The æsthetic activity and the lyrical character of Art— Beauty as expression—Criticism : does or does not the æsthetic activity create the differentiations we find in the world of intuition?—Æsthetic intuition does not precede purely theoretic cognitive intuition of particulars—Two opposite conceptions of relativity in Art—Beauty as admired Perfection—Æsthetic expression, far from preceding knowledge and action in psychological development, emerges from their common undifferentiation and is last to assert its independence —Croce's æsthetical theory not derived from experience but grounded upon metaphysical idealistic presuppositions—The concept and the logical activity—The pseudo-concepts— The identity of philosophy and history—The theory of error —Reality as History; and History not a form or a continuation of natural evolution, but its essence and truth—Criticism : concepts do not create the differentiation between dream and reality in the world of intuition; they presuppose them— No essential difference between historical and philosophical concepts on the one hand and scientific pseudo-concepts on the other—The identity of philosophy and history as basis of a doctrine of progress and preservation of values untenable in face of the fact of plurality of personalities and of historical lines of development and of their mutual interference—Croce's ethical doctrine—Denial of the existence of value-judgments; the good is not something we will because we know it good; but is good because we will it and while we will it—Liberty and Necessity—The State—Criticisms of the idealistic theory of moral freedom—of the denied existence

of value-judgments—of the relative distinction between good and evil—Progress a meaningless word on Croce's premises—Untenable identification of society with the State and of the State with Government—The path open to a resolution of ethics into a branch of politics; and of political ethics into mere will-to-power—Judged from the standpoint of the requirements of an idealistic immanental logic, the system lacks at the same time unity and momentum and points beyond idealism.

We have so far dealt with the origins of Italian Neo-Idealism from the standpoint of Neo-Idealism itself, *i.e.* according to its own explanation of the causes that made it possible, the deficiencies and self-contradictions in post-Kantian idealism, which Croce and Gentile have made explicit, and the elimination and overcoming of which is the essence itself of this philosophy. We must pass now to the constructive formulation of Croce's philosophy as an articulated whole, which in its own turn will help to make clearer the already given historical account of its genesis.

Mind, that is to say, according to these premises, reality itself concretely considered, is known to us as a knowing and a doing, *i.e.* as an activity capable of assuming either a theoretical or a practical form. And just as the knowing activity is first a knowledge of particular images or intuitions and then, in the second place, a knowledge of relations among them, so the practical activity is first concerned with—in a large sense—*economic*, i.e. particular and individual ends or goods, and only in the second place with *moral*, i.e. universal goods or ends. We have thus

two forms and, within them, four moments of the life of mind, and these forms and moments stand to each other in well-defined uninterchangeable relations. The first of these moments, *i.e.* knowledge of particulars or intuition, Art, imagination, is first in the sense that while it is pre-supposed by the second moment, *i.e.* knowledge of the universal, concept, or philosophy, is quite independent of it or of any other moment. Knowledge of universals pre-supposes knowledge of particulars; philosophy presupposes expression, *i.e.* Art. But the converse is not true; while the philosopher must be, to some extent, an artist, the artist, as such, need not be a philosopher. Similarly, knowing is independent of doing in the sense that while doing presupposes knowledge as its condition, knowledge does not presuppose action. And in the same manner also while economics, *i.e.* the pursuit of purely individual ends, is presupposed by the pursuit of universal ends, it needs not itself any ethical presupposition. The ethical life does thus presuppose the economic, and the whole practical life presupposes the theoretical life, the highest stage of which, the concept, presupposes as its condition, intuition. The beautiful, the true, the useful and the good are four distinct, pure, universal, concrete concepts, each giving us the whole of reality under one of its aspects. Each is a distinct concept, *i.e.* it is a real degree of reality: the beautiful and the true are the two degrees of the *theoretic* activity and there cannot be

any other; the useful and the good are the two degrees of the *practical* activity and there cannot be any other; knowledge and action are the two forms of the spiritual life and there cannot be any other. No distinct concept is a mere abstraction. At the same time, each distinct concept is the concrete synthesis of two concepts—two opposites—each of which, taken by itself, is a mere abstraction and is real only in synthesis with the other. Thus beauty has ugliness, its opposite, as an element within itself; truth has falsehood within itself and also is the overcoming of falsehood; and worth is the overcoming of worthlessness; and goodness the overcoming of evil. That is to say, opposition is not between the different moments of the life of mind, but within each of them, just as life carries death, its negation, within itself and is the struggle to overcome it; while both life and death have really no meaning apart from their opposites. The concept of Spirit is thus that of an activity everlastingly growing upon itself through the ever-renewed cycle of the above-mentioned distinct moments standing to one another in the above-defined relations: there is an eternal ideal history or articulation of forms of experience by means of which reality grows upon itself through infinite time.

Two characteristics, therefore, of the philosophy of Benedetto Croce differentiate it from other contemporary systems: the fundamental importance of Æsthetics as a philosophical science and the

conception of reality as history, rather than as a transcendent or static Absolute. This chapter will deal in succession with both these features. Æsthetics derive their central importance, as we have already seen, from the fact that the identification of the æsthetic activity or imagination with the first autonomous degree of experience seems to be a means of overcoming the traditional philosophical dualism of the object known and the knowing subject by resolving the object into an experience of the subject. Croce's theory of Æsthetics resolves itself into the following assertions:

I. There is an æsthetic activity distinct in kind from the intellectual, cognitive activity. In thinking we discriminate, compare, relate, combine the matter of perceptual experience. Now this matter of perceptual experience, if taken as identical with physical reality, is very far from being a simple concept, but is rather the result of a highly complicated intellectual process; perception itself, in any case, always involves logical activity working upon some pre-existing material—some formless, chaotic sense-experience which needs to be reduced to some order. There must, therefore, be an activity organising this chaos into some sort of cosmos before thought intervenes to compare and abstract: an activity which cannot be that of thought; because, while thought re-arranges presentations without breaking them into their sensible elements, the said activity organises these elements into presented imaginative

wholes. Such a pre-logical, image-forming activity is the æsthetic activity.

II. The æsthetic activity is the first or lowest degree of the theoretic activity, because, though purely æsthetic experience apart from any conceptual element is theoretically conceivable, no logical experience is conceivable apart from æsthetic experience. Images are certainly not derived from the breaking up of concepts. Thinking presupposes imagination. Before we know that something is real or possible or unreal there must be before us, or in us, something which in itself is not yet either real or possible or unreal—a world of pure imagination, of pure intuitions. Perception is intuition, but intuition is much more than perception. Intuition is the undifferentiated unity of the perception of the real and the simple image of the possible. In intuition we do not oppose ourselves as empirical beings to external reality, but objectify without addition our impressions such as they are. "Below intuition is sensation, the, as yet, formless matter, which itself can never be grasped by Mind in so far as it is mere matter and which Mind can only possess in Form and through Form, but the concept of which it postulates as a limit. Matter, considered in abstraction from our thinking, is merely the negation of activity, viz. mere mechanism and passivity, that which the human mind submits to but does not produce. Without it neither knowledge nor human activity is possible. But mere matter just gives

us our animal nature, what is brutal and impulsive in man, and not that spiritual mastery which constitutes our humanity." Intuition is, therefore, something which is not yet intellectual and still is something above mere sensation, something implying that which is not implied in sensation: an active work of mind. How shall we then discriminate between what is mere natural, animal experience, and the lowest limit of spiritual experience, *i.e.* pure intuition? There must be a sure way of distinguishing between true intuition and what is below it—the mental from the mechanical, passive and natural fact! Croce's reply is that it is the character of every true intuition to be expressive. "Whatever is not objectified in an expression is not intuition but sensation and animal nature. Mind does not produce intuitions save by forming them, by expressing them. If we separate an intuition from its expression we shall never succeed in reuniting them." "We may seem to ourselves to possess plenty of unexpressed intuition and thoughts and differ from genius merely in degree of power of expressing them; but it is sheer illusion. How often, on careful examination of what appeared at first a great insight, we are left with the sense of utter vacuity! And, on the other hand, how easily do we forget that the greater part of every expression of an intuition is purely internal; that, ordinarily speaking, the outward expression is generally only an extract and a sign of the full expression, and that many intuitions which do not

find external expression have yet a full internal expression, as when we draw mentally a geometrical figure or a landscape! The illusion that we may be Raphaels so far as intuitions are concerned, but poorer by far in expressive faculty, is just as arbitrary as that of supposing that Raphael could have power to express without intuitions." "The painter is a painter because he sees what others merely feel or dimly see through but do not clearly see. Every one of us is something of a painter, something of a sculptor, something of a musician; but how little in comparison with those who are so called because of the higher degree in which they possess the most common dispositions and energies of human nature!" "Every man is born a poet or an artist, in however poor a degree: the difference between ordinary men and geniuses is purely quantitative, not qualitative. And there is no essential difference, so far as the constitution of the human spirit is concerned, between even the intuition of the artist who gives us a masterpiece and my own intuition as I enjoy it in contemplation. It is always and only my intuition which I express when I am enjoying a work of genius; and the greatness of genius is that he renders it possible for me to rise to levels of intuition to which I could never even aspire apart from his assistance." "Those who are pre-eminently artists have the power of persisting longer than other men in the moment of pure intuition, and have the power of aiding others to persist in it.

Artists, it has been well said, preserve the innocent and attentive look of childhood; they are unconcerned with practical preoccupations and undisturbed by them."

This identity of intuition, as the first and lowest form of knowledge, with expression, explains the permanent essentially lyrical character of Art. For, if intuition is really free from abstractions and conceptual elements the content of Art can only be conation, desire, tendency, will, *i.e.* spirit in its practical form in its numberless degrees and in its dialectic of pleasure and pain. As pure intuition cannot, by definition and nature, either be born of concepts or produce and express them, it can only be the form of a content to be found nowhere but in *will* in all its possible manifestations—as passion, emotion, desire, personality pulsating in every throb of artistic life and determining its lyrical character. It is that point of the eternal cycle of possible forms of experience where the highest and last thereof—the ethical—which implies all the others, reconnects itself with the first and lowest degree of theoretic activity.

Art, then, is life taking up form, nay, becoming form. And from this identity of *intuition* and *form*, which is *expression*, follows another character of Art, *i.e.* the quality of uniqueness, of unity and indivisibility peculiar to every artistic production. Every expression is unique expression. Even old expressions become and must become new impres-

sions before they can become elements of new expressions and of a new creative synthesis wherein as a new manifold they are fused into a new oneness. And this expression of impressions, this triumph of form over matter, is the first sign of freedom, the point and moment at which, by emancipating himself from impressions, man rises above them.

What is beauty, then? We have known—ever since Kant—that the beautiful is irreducible to the merely true or good or useful; and that, however difficult it may be to define, the mere fact that we argue about beauty and count it a deficiency to be without taste in the matter, shows that we are not disposed to consider it as a merely individual impression or emotion. Hence the only alternative left is that beauty is successful expression, intuition perfectly expressed or simply *expressed*, for unsuccessful expression is not expression at all; where expression is first and above all the purely internal fact of conceiving vividly and clearly an image or a tune or a statue; and where the opening of our lips to sing or speak or using our pencil or chisel are purely voluntary actions, *i.e.* practical acts having the purely economic purpose of stamping our intuitions on a material capable of preserving their traces more or less enduringly. The ordinary work of art is only a stimulus evoking the reproduction within us of the æsthetic expression. Strictly speaking, to speak of physical objects as beautiful is meaningless. Physical objects may be

aids to the beautiful, but the beautiful in itself is a purely mental act of the æsthetic activity, whose task is just to transform mere matter—*i.e.* purely sensitive, practical and useful contents of experience —into tunes, songs, statues, figures, etc. When the æsthetic activity fails in this transforming effort, when we have spoilt or defective expression, we have ugliness, *i.e.* we are to some extent still outside the world of the Beautiful, still within that world of mere matter which, as against the world of Art, is the world of the useful, the good, or the true. When it is successful, when we are artists, we are so always only on our own account. When I am reading Dante, I understand his poem to the extent to which by my own æsthetic activity Dante's thoughts are recreated as my own thoughts as born anew in me, *are* indeed my own. In so far as I fail to recreate them in me, Dante's poem remains only so much waste paper, useful for other purposes, but not at all a poem.

Such is in very concise outline Croce's philosophy of Art. As it is central to all his philosophy we shall proceed to a critical examination of it before we pass to the other parts.

Let us begin by recalling that, according to Croce, we must admit beneath intuition, as a kind of conceptual limit to spiritual activity, formless matter, a chaos of sense impressions beyond spirit and from which the æsthetic activity draws, as it were, its

primary individual contents, as *e.g.* the colour red, a smell, a tune, *i.e.* those elements without which no development of human knowledge would be possible; formless matter which differs from the matter of Kant's *Transcendental Æsthetics* in that Kant's matter is the qualitatively differentiated world of sensation not yet subsumed under the intuitions of time and space, nor organised by the categories; whereas Croce's matter, the content differentiating one intuition from another, would be utterly indeterminate before such differentiation wrought by the æsthetic activity. This already raises some difficulties. If matter, in itself, is merely a formless content, a mere stimulus to activity, how is it that such a stimulus provokes the æsthetic activity to produce now a red hue and now a blue one or a smell or a tune? Or are we to think that all psychical events are equally due to the æsthetic activity, since each one is qualitatively differentiated from all others? In his early treatise in the *Estetica*, at least, Croce denies that this is so, and excludes from the sphere of intuition what is mere impression, or sensation, or emotion, or impulse, *i.e.* what has not yet received *form* from the spiritual activity. And thus he raises the obvious objection: are not then sensations, impulses, emotions, etc. qualitatively differentiated? And if they are, are we not in presence of qualitative differentiations not due to the æsthetic activity? Or shall we admit psychical events beyond and outside spirit? In other words:

either there are psychical events qualitatively differentiated outside the sphere of intuition, but still within that of spirit, and then there is no room for any formless matter and no need for any intuitive activity to cause such differentiations; or, on the other hand, there is no differentiation save what is due to the æsthetic activity, and in that case even emotions, impulses, etc. are due to it and there is nothing outside it. And as the last horn of the dilemma would imply that there is no difference between mere impression and æsthetic expression, between sensation and intuition, there is no choice but to give up the formless matter and to admit that everything which enters spirit cannot help assuming a determined form, and that spirit, even in sensations, impulses and emotions, is always activity and never mere passivity. But, then, it follows that there is immediate knowledge of concrete particulars without any intervention of the intuitive or æsthetic activity, which therefore ceases to be the essential presupposition of every cognition. Are not sensations, emotions, feelings, impulses immediately apprehended as so many qualitatively differentiated particulars, by the mere fact of being lived through? Is not spirit, in so far as cognitive of particulars, fully realised thereby? And if in a succeeding moment an emotion or an impulse is not merely remembered but æsthetically expressed, would that not be something superadded to the merely cognitive experience?

If from mere sensation we proceed to perception in which the apprehended particular stands before us as something external, independent of our act of knowing, here, too, there is no room for any special intervention or work of the æsthetic activity. If we for a moment, for the sake of brevity, grant that there may be a stage when sensation is not to any degree perception, the transition from such a stage to that of perception can be fully accounted for as due to intellect alone. Here, too, therefore, the same old dilemma confronts us : either the existence of differentiations within the perceived world is due to creative imagination, and if so, all psychological events are artistic creations ; but this is certainly contrary to universal experience and denied by Croce himself ; or, if we hold that imagination has nothing to do with it, then there is a knowledge of particulars without the intervention of the æsthetic activity. Nor does it help in the least to object that in mere sensation the particular is " given," while in perception it is created by the synthetic activity of consciousness, for such a synthetic activity is present also in the world of sensations and emotions ; and, after all, even relations, at least in their psychological aspect, as events in the mind, are concrete particulars. Croce's contention that, ideally, intuition must precede understanding because relations could not be known unless the related terms or things be known first, holds good only if by things we mean sensations ; but then the difference

between the related terms is not, as we have seen, due to any æsthetic activity. If, instead, by things we mean perceived objects, then the knowledge of each of them as a concrete particular—an orange, a horse, a cloud, a bottle—is, as the psychologists show, the result of a very long and complicated process and presupposes many complicated relations between sensations of different organs, relations due to the intellect not less than to later conceptual relations; though at the stage of perception they are still, so to say, one with their terms; not yet emphasised, as it were, at the latter's expense and lifted by abstraction above them to the conceptual level. Far from perception being an æsthetic intuition, it differs therefrom as something presupposed by intuition. And, indeed, if perception be æsthetic intuition, and if, as Croce holds, the difference between the reality and unreality of presentations is not essential to the æsthetic activity, why and how can he deny to hallucinations the æsthetic character? Are not hallucinations psychological events with quite well-defined individuality? Well, then, either all psychological events with well-defined characteristics are æsthetic creations, and hallucinations cannot be exceptions; or, if there are exceptions, and hallucinations are among them, then there is a knowledge of particulars apart from æsthetic activity. Once more, experience is richer than theories framed to set *a priori* boundaries to it! Croce, however, says there is a sure way of

discriminating between intuition and what is mere nature beneath its level. Every true intuition is also expression; what falls short of expression is mere sensation, nature. But, if so, does not any psychological fact fully express itself? Is not hallucination a perfect expression of a given particular experience? Is not love, for instance, the best expression of itself? And if, in the case of emotions, hallucinations, etc., we deny that they are *ipso facto* æsthetic experiences, why should we not maintain such a difference in the case of presentations also? Nay, is not Croce prevented from seeing and admitting this difference by a strange confusion of expressive power with clearness and distinctness of vision? "The world we ordinarily see is a very small world indeed, and consists of small expressions which grow in intensity and width with the growing spiritual concentration in given moments. Even of our own dearest and ever nearest friend of every day and hour we possess intuitively only some traits by which we recognise him among others. The painter is a painter because he sees what others only *feel*, or dimly guess but do not see."

Now, it is not at all true that clearness of images depends on æsthetical imaginative power: it depends only on the type of imagination. There are men who can produce visual images almost as clear and concrete as real visual perceptions; in others the acoustic imagination is by far the richest and

quickest. Now, an artist will inevitably create along the path made easiest to him by his type of imagination; but artistic power and type of imagination are not necessarily connected and are quite independent gifts. A painter may not at all be endowed with strong visual imagination and may yet give to the world real masterpieces; on the other hand, one may possess an extremely good visual imagination, enabling him to recognise and remember and reproduce all sorts of particulars in the human or in the natural world, and yet having nothing to do with artistic imagination and possessing no æsthetic character. Many maniacs possess visual imagination equal to that of many painters. Similarly, there are many people quite capable of remembering whole poems or symphonic pieces, though not in the least poets or musicians themselves. An urchin at school or a Press reporter may give us a detailed exact description of a scene, which a poet may perhaps express in a single verse; yet who can doubt that the poet sees more and better into it? The difference between mere sensation and nature on the one hand and artistic expression on the other is not due to any mere difference in extension and width between the images of ordinary men and those of artists. To say that expression makes all the difference amounts to saying almost nothing at all; for there is no way out of it: things are either intuited or they are not; if they are, every perception, every image, by the mere fact of being the

perception and image of a concrete particular, at least of that concrete particular which is itself, must be its own perfect expression, a thorough work of art.

Indeed, in order not to be such an æsthetic creation it would have to cease to be the intuition of a particular concrete, *i.e.* to cease to be a perception at all; and the same, of course, holds good of every image, emotion, impulse, in so far at least as it is the perfect expression of its own particularity. Nor does it at all meet the difficulty to call in the lyrical character of pure intuition, and say that true intuition always represents and expresses an emotion and is therefore always lyrical, and that the function of Art is to express through an image, and in a manner universally reproducible, an emotion which in itself in its subjective immediacy is purely transient and incommunicable (*Problemi d'Estetica* pp. 3–27). For, if so, Art loses its theoretic and acquires a practical character. It becomes an instrument of communication and, moreover, it remains something distinct and derivative in respect of such an emotion, the transient and incommunicable character of which would not in the least interfere with its value as theoretic experience. Still, the admission is significant. It means that since pure intuitions, *i.e.* intuitions not enlightened by concepts, can only find expression by clothing themselves in words, lines, colours, sounds, etc., which can only fit into the immensely delicate and

dynamic motions of mind by a process of unceasing elaboration implying numberless relations, it follows that the world of intuitions, which, by definition, excludes relations, can only find expression by ceasing to be a world of pure intuitions! Will it be said that, though concepts may enter the world of Art, they enter it no longer as mere concepts but as elements in intuitions, just as blue enters a figure not as the notion of blue but as a characteristic? The reply would be that blue, like every other colour or sound, is a mere instrument of expression and that nothing stands against its expressing the notion of blueness if the artist so wills it. Far from ideas becoming elements of intuitions by ceasing to be ideas, it is intuitions that cease to be pure by receiving light from concepts. Art is, one might say, not the realm of dreams, but philosophy become alive, notions grown into intuitions by embodiment into images. Or, rather, concepts as well as intuitions, *i.e.* the whole of experience, may receive artistic existence.

It is impossible to read any of the best lines of any poet without at once becoming aware that while intuition may indeed exist unenlightened by thought, poetry cannot. Art presupposes truth, feeds upon it and makes it the footstool for its world of presentations of possible truths subjectively felt. Could we have poems about historical events or personalities without historical affirmations or negations

such as are essential to the meaning of any narrative?

> " Tempo *era* dal principio del mattino. . . .
> Elena vedi per cui tanto reo
> *Tempo si volse*. . . .
> *Mi ritrovai* per una selva oscura . . .
> *I' non so* ben ridir com' io v'entrai," etc.

" *Era*," " *tempo si volse* " are conceptual historical elements essential to the whole artistic effect. Are not Leopardi's lyrics full of arguments embodied in delightful chains of images? Who can deny, in spite of Croce's assertion to the contrary, that the deeper we enter into the spirit of the mediæval religious mind, even the purely theological and philosophical parts of the *Commedia* acquire, just because they do not cease to be such, the beauty of something which is not merely understood but loved and sung? Far from being true that Dante deals with them in a purely imaginative way, he asserts some things as true, some others as false. He argues imaginatively, but he *argues* and even wonderfully introduces us to the poetry of truth and doubt:

> " Nasce per quello a guisa di rampollo
> A pié del vero il dubbio ed è natura,
> Ch'al sommo pinge noi di collo in collo."

All the way through " *truth*," " *doubt*," " *nature*," perform their function in the poem by remaining what they are, not by becoming something else; by contributing to a world, which is at once a world of truth, imagination and emotion intensely experi-

enced, a world in respect of which Dante tells us when he is aware of knowing the How and Why of something and when not; not a world in which he has not even yet begun to inquire whether he is asleep or awake. In a word, far from concepts entering æsthetic experience as mere elements of intuition, as mere fragments of themselves, they enter with flying colours and beating drums, as fully equipped and working ideas; while, on the contrary, pure intuitions, far from being full of life, appear just only elements of life, elements which may happen to enter into now æsthetic and now theoretic experience. Pure intuition, far from being the whole of the artistic experience, is only the starting-point, and artistic experience appears as the synthesis of minor syntheses and analyses of many intuitions; a synthesis growing little by little from moment to moment, from intuitions interpenetrated and interpreted by thought, as well as from thoughts imaginatively expressed. It is a synthesis which is not the work of the intuitive faculty alone, but of the whole mind of the whole man at every moment, going back upon earlier moments, re-creating and contemplating anew his own intuition, re-thinking his own thoughts, criticising, applauding, rejecting his own earlier criticism, approval, and rejection; beholding the growing masterpiece at times objectively, at other times within his own throbbing heart, vibrating soul and nerves, and again at other times in the light of the

haunting idea which suggested it and which, in turn, receives from it increasing precision and clearness. That is to say, in the long run, the first æsthetic experience follows upon the first wholly felt perceptive experience of nature, inasmuch as man, in order to seize an object, need not go out of himself; for he seizes it as a moment of his life and therefore as possessed of a lyrical character. In the image he seizes the action of the object upon himself, as far as circumstances, education and psychological constitution allow his seizing it. He experiences and expresses a certain emotion of harmony or disharmony, of rapture or of quiet peace and satisfaction in respect of the world as revealed in the particular experience. An emotion so felt and sincerely and imaginatively expressed is artistic experience, poetry. We have art, poetry, beauty whenever our being as a whole meets reality as a whole, and giving and receiving are one single moment of life. Poetry is primarily the unwritten but directly lived, immediately experienced poetry of life, at once vision and deed. The written poetry is already something less than life; it is what is nearest to it; it is Art; but it is inevitably something less, something paler and vaguer. All great poets and artists have always felt the poverty of Art compared with Life; Browning, Shelley, Carducci, in different ways, echo Leopardi's

> "Lingua mortal non dice
> Quel ch'io sentiva in seno."

Still, even so, Art, as being something different from mere intuition which it presupposes, as being a synthesis at once of idealised intuitions and of individualised concepts, though inadequate to life, is nevertheless not purely subjective. When a given fragment of world-reality, whether selected or fortuitously encountered, meets the organs, bodies, and mind of well-built individualities, the resultant impression provokes emotional resonance and imaginative and conceptual expression. When, therefore, will, love, hate, joy, pain are called into action and light is added to light, and warmth to warmth, and strength to strength, and the whole spirit embraces within its light and makes its own the whole of known reality and pours upon it, so to say, the whole flood of its wealth of knowledge, emotions, longings and memories, while drawing from it new means of expressiveness, then and then only do we have together on the one hand the æsthetic experiencing, and on the other the revelation of outward beauty through physical means interpenetrated and transfigured by Spirit, as in any work of Art.

In other words, just as we see colours and outlines only if our eyes are normal and normally active, so we see external beauty only if we are fit and trained to see it. The immensely different and often apparently irreconcilable æsthetic judgments of men in regard to human or natural beauty are sufficiently accounted for by the diversities of

race, temperament, education, etc. From the fact that even the Bay of Naples finds its critics and detractors, Croce concludes that there is no external beauty. But are there not detractors also of the Venus of Milo and of Dante's poem? What does that mean but that there is a law of relativity for works of art as well as for fragments and moments of the universe? The fact is that we have to choose between two possible interpretations of this law of relativity, one compatible and the other incompatible with an objective philosophy of Art. According to Croce and all subjectivists, as we saw, a given intuition either is or is not *expressed;* if it is expressed, such expression could not be improved upon; such perfect expression is beauty; therefore the beautiful does not admit of degrees, while there are degrees in the ugly or less beautiful, *i.e.* whenever there is unresolved strife between the expressive formative activity and the passivity of the chaotic formless matter of pre-æsthetic experience. Therefore each work of art is incomparable with every other, is a model to itself and an absolute in itself. Now, as we already know, on Croce's premises, all moments of experience would be æsthetic experiences and perfectly æsthetic experiences. Moreover, if this is not the case, who shall judge when the expression is or is not full? Or shall we say that the only standard of whether we are or are not in the presence of perfect beauty is the very instant of the intuition? But how can

we ever maintain that such an instant, inasmuch as a mere instant in an ever-changing creative process, is both the best actual and the best possible æsthetic experience? How can we deny that, for example, Shakespeare and Dante suggest themselves inevitably as standards of expressive power and that, as such, they limit the perfection of other artists' work, which, apart from them, might appear first-rate work? Or that even the best works of Art, each in itself, by increasing our capacities for æsthetic criticism, suggest comparisons, corrections, new ideals and types of beauty awaiting embodiment from chisel, pencil, or brush? Are we not in danger, on these lines, of making æsthetic criticism altogether impossible and of landing ourselves in thorough-going scepticism or a new dogmatism?

The other interpretation of the law of relativity as applicable to works of Art starts from the well-ascertained fact that æsthetic activity presupposes knowledge of universals as well as of particulars. The eye sees a young man; mind sees youth, and the *notion* of youth is susceptible of ever-growing depth. And the same is true of the notion of everything; there is a scale of degrees of knowledge from a lowest to a highest. It follows that for each of us Man is the notion of man of which he is capable. For some he is only a more or less refined and polished beast; for others a potential god. We argue that both notions are errors; but how could we argue except

by common notions? And how can we argue except on the assumption that there must be some notions truer than others and that there must be a notion capable of enabling us to know Man as he truly is, a notion in its turn susceptible of indefinite improvement?

Likewise for each of us things will be beautiful according to our notions of them; our disagreements and contrasts will depend on our differing degrees of knowledge and experience of the same reality; the deeper and wider this knowledge, the greater the agreement among the judgments of those, alas, very few, qualified to judge; the same reality embraces us all and cannot but lead to the same notions whenever we fit ourselves to survey the same fields.

Beauty will, accordingly, be *admired perfection*, *i.e.* admired adequacy of anything to our notion of what it should be. While intuition, as mere knowledge, grasps things as they are so far as it grasps them at all, the æsthetic activity seizes them in their adequacy to the meanings they suggest. We judge a work of art good inasmuch as the idea of the artist is thoroughly expressed in it, and inasmuch as there is nothing in it irrelevant to the expression of such idea.

Now three things are to be noticed. When the perfection of a work of art seems to us to transcend the notion of reality expressed by it, and we ourselves are not ready to rise to the notion to which

the masterpiece is adequate, we experience a sense of contrast, of ugliness, of *inartisticità*, such as often happens when an artist is far ahead of tradition and average artistic education; a sense of contrast nevertheless different from the one experienced in presence of something not adequate to its idea. Secondly, we easily tire of a given beauty; we tire even of the best we possess; and long for new and different kinds of beauty, and this not merely or mainly because of the instability inherent in all pleasures, but because when mind has been for some time contemplating anything, abstraction inevitably comes in, altering, deepening, enriching our notion of it, to which, therefore, the old work of art ceases to be true. Thirdly, we get very quickly tired of common and easy types of artistic production, and conversely only after many years of prolonged study and of ripening experience, not merely of Art but of life as a whole, do we succeed in realising the trueness and greatness of the highest kinds of artistic production.

Now these three experiences would seem to be unaccounted for by the theory of art as intuition—as expression of states of mind. According to it we should find perfect satisfaction and peace in every work of art, nay, in every moment of experience, for, as has been already pointed out, every moment of experience, according to this view, is a perfect æsthetic experience at least of itself. On the contrary, all these three experiences are per-

fectly intelligible if we conceive mind as ever, so to speak, urged, as it were, by an independent and real world, itself expressive and suggestive of meanings, to gain knowledge and appreciation of such a world and to share in its process of appropriation by the Spiritual Life—and if artistic, human creativeness is conceived as the continuation of such process of appropriation going on in different ways and degrees throughout the universe.

Nature and works of art, far from being merely external stimuli to the activity of the intuitive faculty (and why on any thoroughly idealistic premises should there be any such remnants of transubjective reality?), ever ready to reproduce as a purely mental fact the artist's intuition (the only real work of art) have indeed a real beauty of their own. There is always an objective perfection (how can we doubt of it since we *think* it?), a real perfection whether of man or of human works of art or of nature, which does not admit of degrees; a perfection which is the adequacy of expression to our notions of such realities; and the apprehension of which, when we have trained ourselves fit to grasp it, is the cause of the peculiar emotion and judgment we experience and pronounce in presence of anything beautiful. However perfect in itself any work of Art may be, in the long run it raises the question: "How much of reality does it express? How much of my nature does it satisfy?" thus urging us beyond itself. Every work of art begins

by claiming to be a world in itself; nay, more, to be, at least for a moment, which is thereby a glimpse of eternity, *the world*. But the claim can uphold itself but for a moment, for there are degrees of beauty because there are degrees of approachment to fullness of life and wholeness of reality; there are degrees of beauty because in some things there is packed, so to say, more life and reality than in others. For a moment each work of Art or apprehended "thing of beauty" stands, as it were, for the whole universe and for the whole of time summed up in eternity; but soon other moments of perfection dawn beyond it and we relapse into succession, restlessness, and longing till another such blissful instant occurs; and so on till mind finds rest only in the notion of one such all-inclusive, co-extensive grasp of reality as a thing of beauty of which every natural or human beauty is, as it were, a fragment pointing beyond itself. Thus while a purely subjective theory of Art does not cover all the relevant facts of the æsthetic experience, it is quite possible, at least in general outlines, to hold an objective theory of Art capable of doing full justice to the law of relativity. The Nemesis of denying objective perfection is the raising of every moment of experience into an æsthetic absolute in itself.

We have so far criticised Croce's philosophy of Art, starting from his own premises and considering

it in itself. In the light of the conclusions so far assured it is no longer either illegitimate or unfair to consider its relation to the whole system of the four moments of experience in their ever-recurring cycle.

The first remark that from this standpoint occurs to the mind is that, however logically perfect and compelling such a system may be with its well-defined links of implication among its forms and degrees, it does not correspond to any real order of development whether in the individual or in the race. It is not at all true that either in animals or in children the theoretic form of activity precedes the practical; they are inextricably mixed and even fused. The animal does not in the least interest itself in the knowledge of things as they are, but only in things capable or not of satisfying its needs, of helping or hurting it. It is only intent on selecting signs of approaching danger or of favourable events; the intuition of the concrete particular, far from preceding the knowledge of the universal, comes in only very late, when comparatively disinterested experience becomes possible; and still later does æsthetic experience, which presupposes independence from purely utilitarian preoccupations and from purely theoretical curiosities, assert itself against and above both of these. Expression at first has a purely practical value, and, far from being expressive of particulars, is expressive of characters common to several important and inter-

esting things. The drawings of children and savages are just expressions of generic ideas; not drawings of this or that man, of this or that dog, but of men in general and dogs in general; they draw in order that somebody may recognise somebody else in general, or the representatives of given classes: warriors, priests, peasants; they are signs and nothing else.

This is quite sufficient in itself to show the impossibility of Croce's identification of æsthetics and the science of language. Sound as such is not language; sound becomes language as the symbol of something beyond itself, of something which, to be conveyed, must needs be not a concrete individual but a common quality or group of qualities; how then could the science of intuition-expression, *i.e.* the science of expression of pure intuitions of particulars and nothing else, be identical with the science of expression of common meanings? The truth then is that neither artistic activity precedes the logical activity, nor both these activities precede first the utilitarian and then the ethical degree of the practical activity, but that all these moments and degrees coexist at first in a condition of undifferentiation. In this undifferentiation the utilitarian form of the practical activity tends to prevail at the beginning, and by degrees first the knowledge and expression of generic qualities assert their growing independence as against mere praxis; next emerges

the knowledge and expression of particulars; and only in the last instance does expression, whether of particulars or of universals, assert itself as an intrinsic value both against mere praxis and against mere knowledge.

To say, as Croce does, that the practical use of things does not detract from their free artistic expression and that things are beautiful if and in so far as they express their end, may be true; but then what is an end but a concept? And to speak of ends is also to pass from the purely theoretical to the practical form of experience and to forget, moreover, that a thing which answers its purpose may be spoken of as fit or good; not, properly speaking, as beautiful. Moreover, there is an essential difference, as we have already seen, between intuition as theoretic and intuition as æsthetic experience. We have seen that the latter presupposes the former as at least one of its elements. To this essential difference we must now add another. Actual apprehension of things seems at least to be caused from without and to be in no sense our creation. On the contrary, in æsthetic experience we behold images, statues, lines, tunes as just our own creation. The artist does not know, perhaps, how he created them; we know that not all spiritual activity is necessarily conscious; but he knows that he created them and that they bear the stamp of his genius. In theoretic experience consciousness appears to itself as almost a

mirror of an independently real world; in art it feels creative of a world of its own.

There is no way out of the following dilemma. *Either* we want faithfully to describe experience and remain within it, and then we must recognise that the theoretic, æsthetic and practical forms of experience are different each from the other two and mutually irreducible and equally real; so that they cannot be identified merely because they are all kinds of the same genus activity; *or* we wish to transcend experience and to pass from its three aspects to construct metaphysically their unity behind their distinctions, at the cost of declaring sheer illusion the distinction between the theoretical in which we *do not* feel, and the æsthetic form of experience in which we *do* feel creative of what we behold before us; and if so we must declare illusory the distinctions between both Knowledge and Art on one side and Praxis on the other. In other words, we should have to identify Art and Praxis because in both we feel creative, in spite of the fact that in ethics we act in order to organise what *is* in the light of what should be; while in Art, though artistic creation may include, as its own raw material, both knowledge and morality, we create just for creation's sake, transcending both. While both Knowledge and Praxis keep, so to say, their feet on the ground of known reality, Art, too, is activity, it is true; but activity drawing strength from them and building

upon them. If we even but for a single instant were aware of the world as a creation of our own, we should be aware of it as of the greatest of all our possible works of art, and there would be no longer any room left for even the illusion of knowledge, if by knowledge be meant what we all in our unsophisticated moments mean by it: the experience of something not ourselves and whose existence is independent of our experience of it. Art is freedom just because in it, in contrast with what happens in Knowledge, we are conscious of a subjective contribution to reality, of a creative addition to it. Tears, fears, griefs, not in themselves beautiful, become beautiful by being ideally reproduced and expressed. Art is freedom just because it lifts us up above the world of merely known reality. Art and Knowledge do not at all differ as being the intuition of the particular and of the universal respectively, *i.e.* merely in respect of their objects, as Croce holds; for each of them can make the whole of reality its own object: the world of intuition as well as that of ideas. They differ, and the difference is essential, in their standpoints: Art aims at the imaginatively free re-creation of things; Science aims at knowing them as they are and in their relations. The inevitableness,[1] so to say, of the expressive activity, by which one form only is capable of *expressing*, i.e. of making beautiful a given content, is freedom,

[1] Croce's *fatalita*.

because in the realm of Art it is the equivalent of that supreme form of ethical freedom which is not mere freedom to choose, but precedes and transcends choice itself, being the capacity to be all that one can be—*non posse errare suprema libertas*, in St. Augustine's words—and thereby enables us almost dimly to penetrate the mystery itself of divine creativeness and to share in God's joy.

Thus our early assertion that Croce's whole theory of Art is not an inference from known or observable data of the æsthetic experience, but at once a corollary and an instrument of his metaphysics and of the individual and historical prepossessions in which his metaphysics are rooted, will stand out as at least not arbitrary or unjustified. The fact is that Croce believed himself to have found in Art, with its accompanying characteristic consciousness of creativeness, the key to the solution of the last difficulties blocking the path to complete demonstration and acceptance of a thoroughgoing idealistic, immanental philosophy leaving no room for any trace whatsoever of naturalistic or theological transcendence, and thus sanctioning the intrinsic divinity and freedom of the spirit of man. We may formulate the several stages of the argument leading to Croce's philosophy of Art as follows:

I. The whole development of modern philo-

sophy from Descartes to Hegel has resulted in the conclusion that knowledge is not possible unless spirit be the absolute reality and there be no transcendence of the subject by the object, and the object be one with the subject as being his creation; spirit cannot go out of itself; there is nothing but spirit; and matter, or external nature, is only an abstraction due to our severing for practical purposes the content of experience from the experiencing act in which and by which alone it has any reality. Such is the supreme affirmation of a consistent immanental or rather anti-transcendental, anti-metaphysical philosophy.

II. But it is certainly not at the stage and in the form of scientific or conceptual knowledge that spirit is conscious of being the creator of its objects.

III. There must, therefore, be a stage different from, but preliminary to, that of conceptual knowledge, in which the spirit draws from its own creative spontaneity the world of qualities which it may afterwards know; for how can it know unless it first creates something to be known?

IV. But such a stage of experience in order to be preliminary to that of conceptual knowledge and yet different from it, and in order not to have any theoretic value in the old sense, *i.e.* in the sense of being knowledge of some extra-subjective reality, can only be the stage of the creation and knowledge of concrete particulars as purely æsthetic

intuitions and as constituting a world where reality and possibility are as yet undifferentiated.

Once we realise that Art is not expression of mere particulars unenlightened by ideas; that æsthetic intuition presupposes both intuitions and ideas; above all, once we realise that the characteristics of knowledge are, within our experience, irreducible to those of Art and vice versa, Croce's attempt to give us a satisfactory account of æsthetic experience and, by it, to fill the gap hitherto left in the argument leading up to a full-orbed purely immanental philosophy cannot but fail. Immanentism is accordingly shown to be not so much a demonstrated philosophy without presuppositions as, rather, the inevitable corollary and goal of an *a priori* undemonstrated premise—the premise that spirit is shut up in itself, or, rather, is the only reality, shut up in itself only because there is nothing beyond it.

Art is then, according to Croce, the first moment of mind as knowledge, the presupposition and condition of thought. As such it knows and possesses no universality, no unity; it is the world of sheer particulars and individuals. Only through conceptual thought do these really come to constitute a world and cease to be each a world to itself. Only through thought are they seen to possess common characters and to be a unity. What then is thought in contrast with intuition?

Thought is essentially *concept*, concrete universality. It arises from intuitions as something which is implicit in them and must become explicit; a problem the premises of which are in intuition, but which intuition cannot solve, nor even state, and the solution of which can only be given in a higher form of knowledge, the logical, which lives and breathes in the atmosphere of intuition, possessing reality within that atmosphere, and yet differing therefrom. In order to pass from "*this man, this horse*" to "*the man, the horse*," I must, so to say, be able to stand above particular men and horses and grasp their essential common features. What then is *concept?* Let us first differentiate it from many so-called concepts which are nothing of the kind. When we say that an animal is a mammal or that a building is a hundred feet high, what do we really know about such an animal or a building unless we already know what an animal or a building is? Nothing. We have merely classified it. Mere class names do not, therefore, stand for pure concepts, since they do not convey real knowledge; they stand for mere groups of presentations. Nor are so-called mathematical concepts real concepts; since there is no concrete reality corresponding, *i.e.* to our idea of a triangle. The true or pure concept has always three characteristics: it is *expressive*, just as intuition is expressive: it can be defined and described, and thus belongs to the theoretical

form of spirit alone; it is *universal*, i.e. it transcends each single presentation and is not exhaustible by any number of presentations; it is *concrete*, i.e. immanent in all presentations and in each of them. A concept which is not immanent in all presentations and in each of them is the concept of a something which does not exist anywhere. The concepts of quality, beauty, existence, finality, evolution are true concepts, because there is no bit of reality, however wide and inclusive, that can exhaust them and constitute itself as their adequate embodiment, and because there is no bit of reality, however atomically small, without some beauty, quality, finality, evolution, etc., while, on the contrary, this is never the case either in respect of the notions of natural science or of mathematics.

The so-called concepts of natural science and mathematics are really *pseudo-concepts*. Those of the natural sciences are concrete but not universal; those of mathematics are universal but not concrete; while the true or pure concept is not universal *and* concrete, but universally concrete and concretely universal. *House*, *cat*, *rose* are not universals; they are finite in number; there was (we can conceive) a time in which there was neither a house nor a cat nor a rose. Similarly triangles are universals, but they lack reality. And whether empirical or abstracts these pseudo-concepts really follow upon the true concepts: they presuppose the knowledge of realities endowed with existence,

quality, unity, quantity, beauty, etc. They are not in themselves true or new knowledge: they are only useful, *practically* useful intellectual fictions. From this notion of the concept as the concrete-universal follows that to think, to conceive, to judge, to perceive, to syllogise are fundamentally synonymous expressions. There is no knowledge but of a situation which is a synthesis of universality and concreteness, of idea and intuition. The concept transfigures the presentations on which it rises and turns them from undifferentiated into differentiated ones, from mere imaginations into thoughts, and yet the presentative intuitive element does not thereby lose but rather re-affirms more distinctly its own individuality; and this coexistence and interpretation of the logical or universal element, the predicate, with the individual element of the presentations, the subject, is just perception, in which a given fact is apprehended as possessing a certain nature, *i.e.* is *thought*. There is no other real thinking: we can only think, *i.e.* perceive intuitional contents, and we can only perceive anything by thinking it. To think is just to qualify certain intuitional contents by certain universal predicates.

That is the meaning of the famous formula: *the rational is real and the real is rational*. There are no purely *verités de fait* and no purely *verités de raison*. There are no purely *a priori* and no purely *a posteriori* truths. Facts in being known

are penetrated with rationality; and reason in being real is embodied in fact. Individuality and universality always go together. Subject is individualised predicate; predicate is always universalised subject.

It is on this identity of concept and fact in perception that Croce and Gentile rear their theory of the identity of history and philosophy. Philosophy and history deal equally with one and the same reality, which is always at once a truth of reason and a truth of fact. Philosophy considers fact in its rationality, *i.e.* in its universal element; history in its factual, particular element; but philosophy would not really know anything if it confined itself to pure universals, nor would history know anything if it did not see facts in their ideal significance. Without the ideas of truth, goodness, existence, utility, etc., it would be impossible to qualify any event; we would fall into mere blind intuition, into Art; without concrete particulars philosophy would be dealing with mere abstractions; both at every moment meet in the same *a priori* synthesis of individuality and universality, essential to any historical situation. And therefore both are knowledge of the *present*. Only the present, only the object of the present act of knowing, is concrete. Even the past becomes concrete only when it is thought as past by and in a present act of knowledge, *i.e.* only as a distinction within the total actuality of present thought. When we

are dealing with Pericles or Alexander, we do so out of some living present interest of ours, and deal with them as intuitions and concepts necessary to our full understanding of our present historical condition. It is only out of purely practical convenience that we differentiate philosophy from history in the ordinary way: in strict truth we know only the present in perception; and in *present experience* facts and reason, history and philosophy always meet. Thus Croce; but here a difficulty arises.

If philosophy is concept, if to conceive is always to see a reality as necessarily true, *i.e.* in its essential connection with the whole universe, whence error? For error is either the mere opposite of truth, which truth, like every pure concept, carries within itself; and as such is a spring of the thinking process inseparable from truth, which is just the conquest of error as its negative moment; or it is something positive to be taken by itself, as when we say, for instance, that materialism is false; and as such error cannot belong to the life of thought, because thought, the pure concept, by definition and nature, is knowledge of concrete truth and seizes reality in its necessity; if thought were not, as such, infallible, what else could ever make us aware of the errors of thought? The fact is that if error cannot have its roots in thought, *i.e.* in spirit as theoretical, it must have them in spirit as purely practical. We err because instead of seeking

the truth, *i.e.* the theoretic good, we seek some other form of good; not the moral good, because morality requires truth as its foundation, but a merely useful good. We err out of impatience, in order to get some relief from dissatisfaction; or because we fear disturbance in our mental habits, or because we are only seeking arguments against something or somebody. We err because we prefer the useful to the true: error is therefore a rational act suggested by purely economic preoccupations.

Shall we then say that pseudo-concepts, *i.e.* the notions of the natural sciences and of mathematics, are mere errors? They are certainly errors when, forgetting that they are mere schemes, mere abstractions, symbols, intellectual fictions having their utility as mnemonic instruments and presupposing, therefore, the concrete knowledge given by pure concepts, we rear on them philosophical systems; but in so far as we use them as mnemonic aids they are useful instruments and not at all errors.

In perception, therefore, wherein a certain intuitional content is qualified by a certain concept, we reach the highest level of knowledge, the only one theoretically adequate to reality as a whole, the synthesis of individuality and universality, of Art and of Philosophy. And as the conceptual element of the synthesis arises out of the intuitional element created by the same spirit at the level of Art, yet goes on living in that atmosphere and draws therefrom the reality it possesses, and outside

such synthesis there is nothing, the whole life of spirit resolves itself into an historical process, every "moment" of which is at the same time the result of all previous life and philosophy and is itself a given historical situation and the interpretation thereof. History and philosophy are thus, at every moment, the growing self-consciousness which reality is ever acquiring of itself as spirit in inexhaustible process of becoming; that reality which at the intuitional level merely lives its own immediacy and at the conceptual level thinks that immediacy, comes in each historical situation to know itself as carrying within itself its whole rationality. Once we realise that the so-called nature of natural science is only an abstract scheme built up by the human spirit for purely practical, social, descriptive purposes, and that what seems external to thought is itself due to the creative activity of spirit acting as æsthetic imagination, and that therefore spirit knows only what it creates itself and nothing else, there being nothing else to know, we realise also that the universe is only Man, *i.e.* the common humanity of all men writ large, and that, far from history being the continuation of evolution, natural evolution is only an abstract, an echo, a shadow of the only concrete process of history. Just as documents are only signs of past history which lives only as such in the "moment" in which it is being consciously enacted and in the spirit of the historian re-interpreting it, likewise natural events or phenomena

are only fragments of concrete human experience depersonalised and mechanised as signs and instruments of permanent social relations and necessities. Cosmology and anthropology as sciences of nature and of the planetary denizen *Homo Sapiens* resolve themselves into echoes and shadows of human history; and Philosophy herself in the sense of ontology and metaphysics, the traditional guardian of supreme mysteries and revelations, yields her sceptre and becomes merely methodology of history. Kant's "Copernican revolution," the epoch-making discovery of the irreducible *a priori* synthesis of intuitions and concepts which creates reality, has borne at last the child of which it has all along been pregnant: a philosophy of absolute immanence, of the absolute identity of thought with being in very pulse of life.

For Croce, then, the concept arises out of presentations or intuitions as something implicit in these, which they cannot by themselves render explicit and which therefore is made explicit by the logical activity. Presentations are many, individual, changeable; and because of this, there is in each something longing, so to say, to rise above changeableness, individuality, multiplicity, towards unity and universality and to see them as a world.

Now all this is quite true, but it is not the whole truth. Croce has defined the world of pure intuition as the undifferentiated unity of the per-

ception of the real and of the simple image of the possible, as a world in which we know or dream without, so to say, yet knowing or caring to know whether we see or dream. Consequently such differentiation between dream and knowledge, between mere intuition and perception, between fiction and history, should be (as Croce indeed holds it to be) the work of concepts. But how can concepts, which are, according to Croce, at once logical acts and thoughts of reality, which are therefore affirmations of relations and differentiations and of terms related and differentiated, which therefore presuppose such relations in the real, how can concepts be said to introduce such relations into a reality as yet undifferentiated from mere possibility? Can such words convey any meaning at all? In other words, we are faced again by the difficulty that already confronted us *à propos* of the æsthetic activity. There the problem was whether the æsthetic activity found or created the differentiations of the concrete particulars; here the problem is whether the concept creates or presupposes the relations between particulars and, above all, the differentiation between the real and the possible. And, of course, Croce, according to the spirit and premises of his system, has no option but to try to show that the differentiation proceeds from within the subject, though not from theoretic knowledge alone.

Let us, for instance, he would say, suppose we

are contemplating a mountain, *i.e.* having the intuition of a mountain, without knowing whether we see it or are only dreaming of it. In another moment we may wish to see it again. In reflecting upon these two moments we differentiate the last one as an attitude of the practical spirit—desire is incipient will—from the mere intuition of the mountain unaccompanied by any desire. It is thus we come to discriminate that which is only desired from that which *is*. The desired also is real, but outside the theoretic spirit, in will and desire only. What we ordinarily call real, real for spirit as knowledge, is what we experience without intervention of spirit as praxis.

The endeavour, however, falls dismally short of its purpose. It does not explain in the least why the consciousness of the subject, which is the same when engaged in willing and in thinking, should, in order to distinguish between the two, feel the necessity of creating for itself the illusion of an external reality. Secondly, there are no intuitions unaccompanied by some form of practical activity, by some pleasurable or disagreeable emotion, by some attraction or aversion. Purely practical and purely theoretic activity are sheer myth; knowledge, emotion, will are *logically* distinguishable and irreducible, but *really* inseparable aspects of experience. Thirdly, the fact that something confronts us towards which we feel repulsion is never in itself sufficient to drive us to a denial of

its reality; just as, conversely, the presence within the mind of many intuitions towards which we feel indifferent is never by itself sufficient to make us forget that they are mere images. Indeed, would it not be truer to experience to say that, far from anything appearing unreal because it is an object of desire, we desire it just because we know it is not now at hand or existent, and that desire already implies awareness of difference between a really perceived and a merely imaginary object?

We are, therefore, compelled to conclude, in respect of concepts as already in respect of æsthetic intuitions, that, far from creating, they already presuppose a differentiated world of particulars and of particular relations, a world already, at least implicitly, affirmed as independently real and characterised by essential and empirical predicates, at the intuitional level of experience. The condition of indifferentiation between reality and possibility, instead of preceding the stage of theoretic activity and perception, follows upon it as a lyrical condition of mind, as a mood of admiration in which criticism is suspended and argument yields to contemplation. Of course, this we must repeat, such a presupposition is purely logical, not psychological; as a matter of fact, spirit is never purely theoretic (intuitive or perceptive) or practical; it is always at once these two things together; and however far back we may trace and survey the process of life, we always find conative movements, organic

reactions obviously implying admission of realities external to the organism, *i.e.* that dualism between subject and object which on the stage of human reflecting experience is only making itself explicit.

The second fundamental criticism of Croce's logical theory turns on the dualism it establishes between philosophical concepts or pure concepts and the pseudo-concepts of the natural and mathematical sciences. Such a dualism is fully intelligible as a reaction against traditional intellectualism and its tendency to consider science or knowledge as consisting in a system of unchangeable universals, in subservience to the prejudice that only the unchangeable lends itself to being known; a tendency and a prejudice due to the fact that mathematics were for long the typical science, a prejudice leading to the denial of any reality to individuals as such. But from the fact that the world in its concrete process is never sheer repetition, a sheer exemplification of types and formulæ, it does not follow in the least that natural and mathematical ideas are purely practical expedients void of real theoretic value, and that they therefore stand in irreducible contrast to philosophical and historical knowledge. The world is neither absolute unchangeableness nor absolute novelty; between the eternal and the merely fugitive there are numberless intermediate degrees of lasting reality; and therefore beyond concepts giving us the universal notes of reality and the mere intuition of the irreproducible moment,

there must be a whole world of things qualifying the whole process and not knowable through pure concepts. The pure concept gives us the universal meaning; the particular intuition gives us the mere individual; the scientific concept or pseudo-concept tells us how different classes of individuals are related to the whole; it tells us what they have in common beyond the categories and what persists beyond the universal relations; it tells us more than particular presentations, and it helps to determine the universal in its relations with less inclusive and less lasting entities. To say that a certain animal is a mammal certainly does not tell me anything if already I do not know what an animal is; but it does convey to me much more than the mere notion of animality by helping me to determine such a notion.

The fact is that when Croce says that pseudo-concepts presuppose philosophical concepts and cannot therefore convey new knowledge, and must accordingly be only practical aids to knowledge, he is right if by philosophical concepts we mean the categories: I cannot know what a mammal is unless I know what an animal and a vertebrate is. He is mistaken if by philosophical concept he means the Hegelian *idea*, the *individuum omnino determinatum*, the universal in all its possible determinations, the individual known in all its concrete relations with every moment of the universal life, such as God would see it or such as God, being

the only really Concrete-Universal, would see Himself. In this sense the philosophical concept, far from being a presupposition of every other lesser kind of knowledge, is ever an ideal, even for philosophers, who, like other human beings, grasp only a few among the numberless links between individual reality and the universe of being, and think the remaining ones as indeed real, but only as conceptually necessary yet problematic objects, *i.e.* as ideas not confirmed by or embodied in intuitions. Therefore the philosophical concept, understood in this latter sense, is just as abstract as every purely mathematical concept; while, on the other hand, every purely empirical pseudo-concept, such as rose, cat, house, in so far as giving us characteristic features of partial spheres of the universe not detachable from it but distinct within it, cannot be superseded by the pure concept, but must find a distinct place in it and share with it some amount of concreteness and real theoretic value. The philosophical concept cannot supersede the scientific concept, and can only integrate it, just as thought cannot supersede but can only integrate intuition.

Moreover, if pseudo-concepts, *i.e.* the whole world of science, cannot convey real knowledge because reality is neither constant nor uniform, and they, on the contrary, emphasise and consider only uniformities and neglect differences, how shall we explain the success of science? How could the

practical spirit emphasise uniformity and likeness at the expense of change and difference, unless there be uniformities and likenesses at least as real as many changes and differences? Besides, if scientific concepts are not true to reality because reality is ever changing and different, how should we think of applying to reality the concepts of evolution, existence, quality, finality, etc., since in respect of these also no two facts are absolutely the same? More than this: pseudo-concepts, though due, according to Croce, to the practical spirit, yet fall within spirit, outside which nothing is real; they fall within it no less than pure concepts; so that when our mind grasps them, they are grasped not as fictions but as reals; how then shall we differentiate them, as having no theoretic value, from true concepts, since, as given in consciousness, they are equally real, and since for idealism subject and object are identical and nothing is real outside the knowing act? Now, once we see that there is no essential difference between scientific and philosophical concepts, we realise also the impossibility of contrasting scientific with historical knowledge and of denying the theoretic value of scientific concepts for history. On the basis of purely philosophical concepts, for instance, it would be impossible to say which of two different accounts of the death of an important personality is true; since the same essential categories would be implied in both, whether we suppose that in

one case the cause may have been the drinking of poison or in the other heart failure. If we can establish the truth of the first as against the second, it can only be done through purely scientific concepts valid only for limited classes of particular facts. Just because the philosophical concept is a synthesis of universal relations, it is by itself incapable of differentiating between relations which are and relations which are not universal; and therefore it fails to give a full account of aspects of reality which qualify the whole and yet are not pervaded by universal categories alone.

The only difference between scientific and philosophical concepts, just as between philosophical and historical concepts, is of a purely practical nature. Just as a philosopher may feel compelled to treat in several chapters and volumes what is, in fact, the content of a single intuition, likewise it may be and is in practice expedient that for some purposes we may deal separately and provisionally with the permanent and universal aspects of being, for other purposes with less permanent and universal aspects; for some purposes with the particular and intuitive, for others with the universal and ideal aspect of experience, although we know that experience is one and is the unity of all these distinctions. But in itself the process of knowledge is always of one tissue from its lowest to its highest level: intuition and concept, in the sense of category, characterise the earliest experiences of reality

as well as the highest, and the only difference is in the richness and articulation of the sum of experiences they constitute at the several possible levels of individual and historical development. The child has a poorer and less closely knitted articulation of experience than the adult; but qualitatively the experience of the child and that of the adult are identically constituted and both are apprehensions of reality, of a reality given, not created by being apprehended.

Now at last we can examine Croce's culminating doctrine of the identity of history and philosophy. It rests, as we have seen, on the assumption that the whole process of the historical development of philosophy through self-criticism has resulted in demonstrating the self-contradictoriness of the common realistic standpoint, thus proving the idealistic contention that experience is intelligible only if taken as not merely the type but the very substance of reality, *i.e.* only if we hold that instead of things and events existing as objects of experience independently of the experiencing act, they exist only in and through it. Viewed in this light they appear to exist independently of it solely owing to abstractions suggested by practical requirements. For in practice, as social beings we need not at every moment keep present the fact that we are subjects of experience, but must concentrate our attention on what is the common content rather than on the individual differentiating content in all our experiences. Once

we accept this premise, that " reality is experience," the task of philosophy resolves itself into that of understanding the articulation of experience itself, and the movement to which it owes its differentiations; and since we have seen, according to Croce, that spirit is so constituted that at every moment action can only arise on the ground of the concrete situation known at such a moment, and can only result first in the expression and then in the knowledge of the new historical situation hereby created, we rise to the conception of spirit as essentially an historical process in which mind ever grows upon itself, ever passing through the cycle of its two eternal forms and four eternal " moments," and in which each " moment " does not destroy but only overcomes and preserves within itself all its predecessors.

We reach, in a word, the notion of spirit as the *unity-in-distinction* and the *distinction-in-unity* of its forms and moments in their well-known and defined implications, and as consequently unable to realise itself wholly in any of them, and therefore driven by its very unity and universality to transcend them all *ad infinitum*. In such a notion of reality as spirit, and of spirit as historical process ever gaining in richness and depth of content, ever preserving and renewing all its past in its eternal present, there is no longer any room left for a dualism between history and its rationality, in the form of a development directed by a transcendent

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Providence determining its goal; for history is self-directing, and rationality is immanent in each of its moments. Nor is there any room left for any dualism between facts and events as such and our knowledge of them, since facts are known through the very deed to which they owe their existence; strictly speaking, facts are deeds and praxis is the praxis of thought. Nor, finally, is any dualism left between philosophy and history, since at every moment the given situation contains within itself all previous life and thought and raises problems which are at once historical and philosophical. Philosophy is always historical as being the criticism of the categories implied in the understanding of a given situation; history is always philosophical, for in every situation fully understood the whole universe is mirrored. Plato and Aristotle are possible only on the morrow of the Peloponnesian War and of Alexander's wars respectively; just as Hegel is possible only after the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire. Such, after the attempt to conceive reality in physico-mathematical terms and in reaction against it, and after the attempt to conceive it in biological and psychological terms, is Croce's attempt to conceive it in historical terms and to raise history into the central self-revelation of spirit.

The first thing that strikes us in this doctrine of the identity of history and philosophy is the

lack of any path out of solipsism, *i.e.* out of the subjective experience of the individual towards the admission of the reality of other individuals, or at least of a larger whole of experience. We shall return to this point in the next chapter. Here we shall limit ourselves to show that even if this difficulty is overcome—and doubtless Croce admits of a super-individual historical process, of which individual history is a fragment—we are still confronted with formidable objections. We would have first of all to admit that there is a single progressive historical process; that the subject of experience is not my empirical ego, nor that of any other person, since our notion of ourselves as of one among many subjects is already a highly complicated differentiation within experience, owing to which we consider our minds on the pattern of our bodies, *i.e.* on the pattern of objects, while the real subject of experience, the author of such self-differentiation of experience as a whole, being a subject, cannot be conceived in terms of objects and is prior to every notion of *before* and *then*, of *here* and *there*, of *one* and *many*. It is only of such a subject that history could be said to be a single historical process. Only if we could legitimately conceive the single process of the universal life on the type of the single process of our individual experience, with its rationality and progress guaranteed by the above described articulation of the different forms and moments of spirit,

could Croce's claims for his philosophy as a philosophy of pure immanence be upheld.

But we meet at the outset with a tremendously stubborn fact. If there be really not many minds but a single universal mind, how is it that at any moment we ignore each other's thoughts and feelings, how is it that each of us is unable to experience his friend's thoughts with the same immediacy which belongs to his own, and we all need signs and interpretation of signs? How is it that we are unable to call up, for instance, the real intuitions of Dante and Petrarch, with the immediacy that was their own, just as we call up our own memories, and, on the contrary, need manuscripts, books, and laborious processes of interpretation? Notes on a diary *may* be helpful to our individual memories, and are not always indispensable; but never can any of us evoke from the past to his own mind the life of his ancestors apart from documents. There is not between their experience and his own the continuity there is between any two phases of his history. There are, therefore, at any moment not a single one but many acts and processes of experience going on independently of one another; there are many histories of individual lives and of whole civilisations, and therefore there may be mutual interferences causing discontinuity in this or that stream of life; *i.e.* we must admit that there may be and are relations of mutual transcendence between individual minds and social and historical processes. *Unilinear* progress is

not, therefore, guaranteed at all: there is no assured conservation of values; there may be individual and social processes interrupted by others against which they may be absolutely unable to make a stand and which may well seem to be overwhelming as cosmic energies. There is no dialectical argument capable of accounting for the difference between the immediacy characteristic of my own experiences and the merely mediate knowledge I have of other people's experience; my very contradictions and changes are vitally connected in a way that has no analogy with any possible connection between them and those of others. We may wish and will the same objects, but our *wishings* and *willings* are many, not one. The attempt, therefore, to reduce so-called empirical personalities to moments or fragments of a single historical process in respect of which they would stand in the same relations as successive phases of a single individual life, breaks down before the undeniable fact of the simultaneous existence of many more or less mutually interacting personalities and groups and systems of historical life, often in diverse stages of development. History is certainly an essential feature of reality higher than mere nature or mere life; but it must be conceived in a manner far more concrete than Croce, on his premises, can allow; not, that is to say, as a process of which personalities are mere moments, but as a process arising from their interaction and from that of co-existing, often converging and conflicting, systems

of life. It must, moreover, be recognised that history, even so conceived, does not appear as in itself so organically unified as to provide a pattern for a supreme philosophical synthesis, especially also because it is manifestly impossible to reduce nature to a merely human and purely practical system of psuedo-concepts. For, as we have seen, these convey to us real knowledge about real aspects of being not sufficiently describable by means of categories alone. The true concrete universal, synonymous with the Hegelian idea, is, therefore, to be sought in a synthesis of not merely historical concepts. For philosophy is necessarily historical in the sense of arising always from definite historical situations; but there are permanent conditions of human life, characterising all historical situations, raising problems as to man's relation with non-human realities and the outlook on human destiny as a whole, for the solution of which other than purely historical categories may be required. Philosophy may be wholly identical with history in the sense that philosophical ideas and problems are an essential element of human history; and yet history may be less than philosophy, in the sense that even history is less than the whole human and cosmic problem.

The highest form of spiritual activity and one presupposing the theoretic form as its foundation is the practical activity, whose highest "moment," presupposing the economic "moment" or volition of the

useful, is moral activity or volition of the universal or simply of the good. It is to the philosophy of action, to *praxis*, we shall therefore now turn.

Volition and action, then—and what action is not volition and vice versa?—presuppose as their matter or basis some knowledge. What can it be but the knowledge of a given historical situation? *Nil volitum nisi cognitum.* There is no such unconscious will as Schelling, Schopenhauer, or von Hartmann dream of. Volition is not the surrounding world perceived by mind, but a new fact having its root in mind, and, as at every moment the situation perceived is changing, volition changes too. In order to will we must at every moment renew contact with earth, recover strength and alter direction. Volition is not the situation but arises upon it and changes with it. An ever-changing perception of reality—such is the single theoretic condition of volition, since intention and action and volition are fundamentally one and the same thing. Just as effective intuition is one with expression, so concrete intention is one with volition; there is no *will in abstracto.* Of course we must not confuse action, which is the deed of the individual, with the event, which is the work of the whole, and to which the individual's deed is only a contribution. Similarly volition and action, or rather volition-action, is identical with the feeling of self-approval or disapproval; that is to say, so-called practical judgments, or value-judgments as to something being

worth doing or not, follow rather than precede volition; far from being a condition of future volition they are echoes of past volitions, are past volitions made objects of reflection together with the expression of emotions experienced in our past doings. To will a certain end as a good is to will ourselves as elements in a synthesis with a given historical situation; it is to realise ourselves in and through it. In other words, the real end or good is the willing itself, which therefore is not known and does not know itself, but is only known when, once willing as such is over, we arbitrarily dissect volition into its distinguishable but inseparable elements: the *willed good* or *end*, the instrumental *historical situation* and the *willing subject*. In willing, man is not pursuing some fixed idea or plan, but is just like the athlete or the swimmer, who at every moment alters his motions in response to those of his opponent or of the waves of the sea. This thesis, that action-volition only arises upon some known historical situation is, however, true only if concretely taken in conjunction with the opposite thesis, flowing also from the notion of spirit as cyclical, that the theoretic activity presupposes the practical. How could there be knowledge of any historical situation unless there is some reality to create it, and of what reality could it be the offspring except previous volitions? In other words, there is no primacy either of knowledge over action or vice versa: each presupposes the other and the two together constitute the rhythm

of the spiritual life. And what is volition and how does it arise? Volition is the reaction of the individual, as a microcosm, to all the suggestions from the surrounding world acting upon him. Just as there is one perfect expression for a given world of images and intuition seeking utterance; just as there is one concrete idea adequately mirroring a given historical situation, so there is only one reaction which can achieve the fullest synthesis of all the multiplicity which is within me with a certain situation which is given to me or I have given to myself: such a reaction is the volition, *i.e.* the good deed. In so far as I am not reacting in the only way demanded by the situation, multiplicity is not, therefore, reduced to unity, and passions and desires are not smelted, fused and steeled into a *will* capable of mastering and subduing the situation so far as it lies in me to do so; there is no real will, nor liberty, nor, therefore, goodness. The volitional act is accordingly at the same time necessary and free. Just as expression arises from a given emotional and intuitional condition of mind, but gives it new form; just as the concept arises upon a given world of expressed intuitions, but is something more and bestows upon that world a new meaning, so volition arises upon a situation which it does not merely reproduce, but into which it introduces an element of novelty. Volition cannot arise in a *vacuum* and is thereby *necessary;* but it is not confined within nor bound by a given condition of fact and is thereby

free. Such being the nature of volition, let us see it at work. Just as there is no concept really alive apart from intuitions, so there cannot be any volition of the universal, any moral deed, which does not imply the volition of the merely individual good. We cannot will the good of all without willing our own good within it. The merely useful act does not satisfy the whole of our nature, and therefore moral action, though having its concrete root in pleasure, is also renunciation of pleasure if such pleasure be devoid of universality. Goodness is the volition of the concretely universal good; or, also, the concrete-universal willing itself, the fullest self-realisation of spirit. When I am willing the universal, it is not so much I, this empirical individual, who is willing, as the Universal Ego, Spirit, willing itself in this given situation through and in me as an individual. Therefore, there are practical *principles*, *principles* of action—such as willing the good, the useful, the true, the beautiful—which are eternal, unchangeable, all-embracing, and not merely realisable, but realised at every moment in every act of will, since every act of will cannot help being either purely economical or moral. But there are no *laws*. Laws, whether social, legal or political, stand to real practical *principles* as pseudo-concepts stand to philosophical concepts. They are plans, schemes, classes of actions which individuals frame of their own initiative as aids to conduct; therefore they cannot be concrete volitions;

there can never be two identical volitions in an ever-changing world, and one can only react in a unique way to always unique situations. Just as diseases are only class-names for cases more or less roughly similar of individual patients, so laws are only roughly defined types of reactions to more or less similar situations, none of them applicable in a literal way to any single case in its entirety. Consequently, in opposition to *principles*, they are neither all-embracing, since each of them applies only to a partial sphere of conduct; nor unchangeable, since they change with time and place; nor real, since they are but useful fictions, types of conduct in roughly defined circumstances by adhesion to which we are trained to make and find our individual paths in life. In conduct, just as in art and in knowledge, we achieve individuality only through an efficient organisation of aids to critical assimilation of accumulated experience.

The State, from this point of view, is, in itself, philosophically considered, but a metaphor, a mental category; for what is it but a process of useful actions of individuals within a group, and of such a group as an individual in contact with other similar groups? What is it but just the Government? It is just a certain changing system of useful individual actions and reactions, gathering its strength on the one hand from the whole human spiritual force of such group—this being the moment of authority—and on the other hand gaining consent to this force

on the ground and under the pressure of given historical situations: "Liberty seeks and wills authority and authority guarantees liberty," and both are always inseparable and ever renewing their mutual relations. Each of us is at once subject and sovereign, limiting and limited even though he be placed at the ship's helm, with naught above him but God or the Idea or History. And as in the long run decision belongs only to the individual, *i.e.* to the one, and counsel and wisdom to the few, and power of co-operation to all, the State is always at the same time necessarily Monarchy, Aristocracy, and Democracy. Such is the State in its concrete minimum of reality and truth. But as man never lives at the merely economic level of experience, so the State is never a mere economic mechanism or process of useful actions or schemes of action, but always has immanently a certain amount of human ethos, of common morality, and is therefore the organised expression of the humanity of a certain group. Thereby authority and liberty acquire a new meaning: authority is the authority of the common moral ideals derived from history: sovereignty is the sovereignty of duty; liberty the power to realise oneself in the fulfilment of duties; and consent the obedience to a force, which is the force of goodness itself as hitherto achieved in the historical life of the group, to which all, humble and great, owe the best they are and before which they are all equal. It is owing to this character of being the embodi-

ment of the best that is common to all the members of a given group, that the State cannot acknowledge either above or beside itself any other form of association. When the Church was stronger than the State, the Church was the real Ethical State, as the expression of the higher morality. When the modern State arose in conflict with the Church and established itself as the supreme power, it became and is becoming more and more the true Church, as the guarantor, teacher, and missionary of a higher life, although it always remains an elementary and narrow sphere of practical experience out of which the moral life flows on every side in many and varied rivulets and fertilising streams.

We shall leave aside any possible criticism following as a corollary from criticisms already passed on previous parts of Croce's philosophy, and shall narrow down our task to an examination of only the outstanding features of Croce's philosophy of praxis.

The foremost of such features is the doctrine of volition as at once necessary and free; as necessary in so far as arising from a given historical situation, and free in so far as it passes beyond it and is creative of a new situation. Does not such a view hold of even merely natural phenomena? When a new event follows upon another, is it not *necessary* as arising upon it, and *free* as being something different and new? Is there then no difference between mere bodies always acting according to the laws of their

nature and men, who, on the contrary, do not always act as they ought, even when they know their duty? And if, in face of a given historical situation, there is only one volition, by which I can enter into synthesis with that situation, and "this volition, which must arise out of this situation, is determined by the situation itself" ("such the situation, such the volition"), how is it we find there is struggle between the volition that ought to arise in such a set of circumstances and other volitions that ought not to arise, and even, as volitions, are not required by such circumstances? Obviously there can only be freedom—a freedom different from that which, in Croce's view, should be recognised even in every new motion of leaf or stone—if mind is endowed, as our conscience testifies, with a power of choice among alternatives; not if it be merely allowed to yield, however spontaneously, to the one situation which at any moment confronts it and to which it needs must yield. Moreover, freedom, beyond being spontaneity, is self-determination, and for Croce there can be no real self but the Universal Self, which is the only true self, and is always free, since there is nothing else.

The second of our criticisms will turn on Croce's denial of the existence of value-judgments as such, and on the truth of the assertion that we do not will anything because it is useful or good, but know it as useful and good because we have willed it. Croce denies that value-judgments contribute anything to

our knowledge of objects; they are merely expressions of an emotion accompanying knowledge, but not susceptible of formulation in logical terms; therefore they are not judgments, but only expressions of value. But, as to the first point, who can deny that to attribute or to deny a certain quality to a certain subject is to judge, and that therefore in the immense majority of judgments we have to do with value-judgments, since "quality" is very seldom indifferent? Even such judgments as $A = B$ or *A is* cease to be indifferent the moment we pass from abstract formulation to real life and say, *Peter is stronger than I*, or *My mother is dead!* The seemingly purely matter-of-fact judgment, *Peter is a man*, what a different value-judgment it becomes expressed by an Alexander Borgia or by a St. Francis! Secondly, it is simply not true that emotion, feeling, sentiment are merely, as Croce holds, forms of pain and pleasure, and therefore belonging to the economic activity of praxis. Have they then nothing to do with Art or moral conduct? Moreover, is not such an assertion contrary to all psychological experience which teaches that emotion is indeed a condition and an antecedent of action, but does not lead necessarily and immediately to it and therefore cannot be identified with it? In the chain of psychological events we find actions subordinated to feeling, and feeling to perceptions, memories, and ideas; but never an inverse subordination of knowledge to feeling and of feeling to action.

Thirdly, it is not true that feelings do not contribute to our knowledge of objects. Feelings and emotions are intimately linked up with sensations and perceptions; for while through these we know objects in their reciprocal relations, through emotion we know them in their relations to us: we know them as useful or dangerous, agreeable or disagreeable. The same sense impressions considered in one aspect give us reality, as it is for all; considered in another aspect they give us reality in relation to each special individual, *i.e.* in its value for each of us, and such relations are experienced not as fortuitous but as uniform and necessary. Far from being the case that feeling is almost something superadded to the intuitions or perceptions to which it belongs, and that therefore judgments of values follow upon reality-judgments, the fact is that both kinds of judgments are expressions of psychological antecedents capable of being *abstractly* considered from several different standpoints, but in *actual* fact, considered in the immediate experiences they express, constituting a unique and indissoluble concrete situation.

Croce's doctrine on this point is, once more, rather a consequence of his premises, according to which experience can only be either intuition, a concept, or a useful or moral act having no more room for emotion as contributory to knowledge than a faithful description of experience. In the cyclical life of Spirit as conceived by Croce, emotion must either be economic

activity or the agreeable or disagreeable concomitant of activity, in whatever of its forms, in so far as well or badly discharged; the taste, so to say, activity has of itself as activity. It cannot be experience of the value of some outside reality for any particular subject. In synthesis with a given situation Spirit tastes and enjoys itself as good. But Spirit, as intrinsically historical, i.e. *Becoming* being its very nature, cannot linger in such situation and must proceed to realise itself through the situation thus created, which would cease to be good and becomes evil if taken as an end in itself and not as an element in a future synthesis. Hence the dissatisfaction of Spirit, as self-realising, eternal and universal Becoming, with Spirit as realised in any particular historical situation or individual as an end in itself. In this dissatisfaction Spirit tastes itself, so to say, as not all that it should be, as not wholly itself, *i.e.* process of infinite self-transcendence, of eternal overcoming of all particular moments of achievement. To be good is to be overcoming and to be self-realising in and through a given historical situation; as such we are at one with the heart of hearts of the whole; not so much we are, as the *Universal is us;* to pause, to stand as if we, particulars, could be the goal, the complete realisation of Spirit, is the sin of Lucifer, is to become bad. To tell us so is the task of emotion, growing into moral dissatisfaction, remorse or failure. There is no other room for emotion in Croce's system.

Thus we are brought to deal with our third object of criticism: the meaning and reality of good and evil in this system. And it seems to us that there is little to be said about it. First, if the volition, which must arise upon a historical situation at any given moment, is the one which answers to such a situation, which such a situation should provoke, and through which alone the synthesis between the self and the situation can be accomplished, is there any room left for volitions which should or should not take place, and therefore for any distinction between good and bad actions? And, secondly, does it correspond to our experience for an action to be good while being performed and evil once it is done, ceasing to be evil only by becoming instrumental to further synthesis? In other words, is it true that there are no actions felt to be bad while being done and no good actions which continue to be felt as good even after they have become moments of further volitions? No doubt when we do something we pursue some form of good; but are we, while willing it, convinced of willing some moral good in any case, or are we not sometimes aware we are not willing the best or are willing only some more or less purely individual, economic good? Thirdly, in spite of all Croce's beautiful pages, each in itself excellent, on passions, on individuality, on character, on vocation, on the discovery of our true self, we cannot avoid putting to ourselves this question: if the individual is at every moment

nothing but the historical situation of the universal spirit in that moment; if the universal is therefore equally present in all its moments; if reality is accordingly already and always divine; if reality is at once individual and universal, whence any necessity for self-education and self-realisation; whence this struggle for triumph between the right volition and the rival possible volition? Let us for a moment accept Croce's attempt to harmonise the partial truth embodied in the theory of progress as progress towards a goal (*progressus ad finitum*), as finite becoming void, therefore, of any intrinsic necessity, with the partial truth of the idea of infinite progress (*progressus ad infinitum*), an idea equally unsatisfactory, since every moment of such a process would at once be equally near to and equally far from perfection. Let us think that the real historical process is at every moment a real attainment out of which arise new problems and new springs of action towards future attainments, including within themselves, as their footstool, all previous ones. Even so the unsatisfactoriness of the *progressus ad infinitum* is not evaded and we are left with a will ever failing fully to realise itself, a will having no other purpose but eternal effort towards triumph, *i.e.* eternal effort never resulting in achievement; and eternal triumph never much different from eternal failure. We are left with the feeling of a Reality ever playing at tragedy with itself; of a whole the necessity of which is the truth of even

our illusions of liberty and of value; of a whole which, neither as a whole, nor in any of its individual parts, appears as characterised by any worth.

For if there is no objective and common standard of value for all volitions, a Standard or End, which, in order to be such must at the same time be immanent in every volition as its mainspring, yet independent of it and therefore transcendent to the whole sum or system of particular volitions, every volition cannot but be equally real and good or bad as any other, if matters are considered *sub specie æternitatis*; and the whole itself cannot, accordingly, but be void of any value. The dualism of reality and value remains unbridged.

Few words will be said in criticism of Croce's political philosophy, especially as it will be necessary to deal with it in a more suitable place, in connection with Gentile's political philosophy. From a purely philosophical standpoint we must first of all draw attention to the fact that the dualism between the merely useful or economic actions or schemes of actions called Laws and the State as a system of such useful fictions on the one hand, and the concrete universalism of moral principles, properly speaking, is no more justified than the dualism between pseudo-concepts and philosophical concepts. Between the absolutely new and unique individual action and the action of the saint, of the hero, or of the ideal man, in which not so much he is willing the universal as, rather, the universal is willing

itself, there are numberless intermediate degrees of actions in reaction to more or less similar situations, and therefore presenting many degrees of particularity and comprehensiveness, each of such degrees thus lending itself to description as falling under a certain category. Now on the one hand there is no moral action, however noble, by an individual or group of individuals, which could be regarded as the volition of its own perfection on the part of perfection itself, *i.e.* the absolutely concrete universal. On the other hand, there is no individual action above the merely useful which is not to some extent good. Thus we are driven to admit that Laws are no mere useful fictions, aids to the moral life, but embodiments of more or less comprehensive ethical ideas. Consequently the State is the most comprehensive of such embodiments, in the sense that all other embodiments presuppose the State as the one which, by making itself the guardian of the conditions of good life, makes possible such expressions of good life as we see embodied in all other institutions grown or growing within it. Thus it becomes itself the greatest promoter and expression of the kind of good life for whose sake it exists. But, as we have seen, Croce goes a great deal beyond this. From the admission that the State is and must be the most useful, efficient and comprehensive expression of the best life, such as it is conceived by all its members in spite of, above and beneath their differences, Croce proceeds to identify it with

Government and to consider it as identical with society. Now, in a sense, of course, it is true that even in the most backward and despotic States everyone is a ruler not less than a subject in so far as, it may be only through tacit consent, he helps the actual rulers rather than hinders them, by his more or less passive obedience. But at the present level of experience, if we wish to state correctly and solve the problems which justify a present-day political philosophy, we must differentiate between three things: Society, or the group carrying on all activities not directly political; the State, the group itself, organised for the best promotion of these activities and their defence against internal or external dangers; and Government, the fraction of society specifically charged with such promotion and defence. Otherwise we incur the danger of identifying the moral ideal with the moral ideas of the party or group of men at any given moment charged with governmental functions and of making morality a mere branch of politics.

Croce shrinks from such a conclusion; but if Society is identical with the State; if the State is identical with the Government, and the Government ends in being identical with a dynasty, or an oligarchy, or a party, or a group, or a man, how shall it be possible to differentiate between ethics and politics, between what is moral duty and what is merely desirable from a purely national or party or personal standpoint? Who would be free in

such a State outside the actual rulers and that abstraction which is the national spirit, considered apart and above the concrete personalities of the individual citizens and interpreted by the rulers and their agents? Moreover, as a matter of fact, we never meet *the* State, but only many States in different stages of historical development and in process of mutual action and reaction. Now let us suppose that, in Hegelian fashion, each State considers itself not as one world among many, sharing the common human nature in which they all partake and through which they are all more or less continuous with one another and of a single tissue, but as *the* world, *the* State. And from considering itself the guardian and expression of the best that is common to all its members, let the State go on to consider itself as the guardian and expression of *the* moral ideal, thus losing sight of the obvious truth that *the* moral ideal realises itself historically through the mutual, cultural and moral reactions through which each State contributes of its best to the common life of all. This position will lead to the denial, in inter-state relations, of the validity of the moral ideas obtaining between individuals, and to admit the fatality of everlasting struggles among human groups, each striving to evolve and impose on others its *absolute civilisation* or *culture*. Instead of a moral and cultural synthesis morally and culturally achieved, we should have a rhythm of alternative impositions and dissolutions of merely

political civilisations, each claiming to be *the* Moral Idea in action.

And, indeed, once we resolve individualities into mere historical moments of the universal spirit, all equally good and bad, and society into the State and the State into the Government; once we cease to recognise any real difference between the process of natural happenings and that of human volitions, since in both alike it is possible to see the two elements of necessity and of freedom; and if all the while we refuse to admit any standard or end at once directing from within yet transcending the historical becoming, then *History* however verbally defined as a *spiritual* process, turns out to be identical with *Nature*, actuality ever identical with value and *Sein* with *Sollen*; and politics, far from being the means of creating and promoting the conditions of the morally best life (why should they, since the actual and the best are always one?), simply come to mean the art of organisation of power on behalf of each human group, the highest plane of organisation of struggles for existence and for pre-eminence among different societies. Morality falls to the level of a mere branch of politics, a kind of conduct the validity and utility of which is measured by the interests and by the will-to-power of each State as interpreted by its rulers. The State, instead of being the guardian, the promoter and the expression of morality, becomes its master and judge. In spite of its internal evolution, Hegelianism brings with

it, wherever it spreads, abundant traces of its Prussian origins and remains the typical philosophy of the self-centred, exclusive and reactionary nationalist State.

And yet these criticisms are not all. They are comparatively unimportant in face of the criticism levelled against Croce by Giovanni Gentile, according to whom the main deficiency of Croce's system is its persistent Platonism, its dualism, its failure really to overcome transcendence and to realise in full the programme of a thoroughly idealistic philosophy. And, indeed, Croce transfers transcendence from a relation between spirit and something outside it into a relation between forms and degrees within spiritual experience; but leaves thereby unresolved the problem of the unity of such forms and degrees. Philosophy presupposes a real world engendering a world of intuitions. Man as a practical being is bound by an historical situation not wholly of his making. Art itself does not fully create its own content; it is form emerging from or superadding itself to subjective conditions of mind previously created by the practical activity. The dualism between subject and object does not cease to be such merely by being transferred to between moments and degrees of the subject's experience. Moreover, as the contradiction from which alone the process may spring is not of one form against the other form of the spirit, or of one

degree against the other degree of each form—*i.e.* not of beauty against truth or of the useful against the good, nor of the theoretical against the practical —but is only within each form or degree, so there is nothing to give momentum for the transition from any one degree to the other or from one form to the other. To term such transition the becoming explicit of what was implicit, and spirit a cyclical activity, is to play with mythology, just as in speaking of evolution from the unconscious to the conscious. Croce speaks of longings, desires, of an inner eagerness, of an irrepressible urge driving the subject to become an object to himself. But these terms either denote concrete volitions, *i.e.* volitions of concrete ends and goods, which therefore already presuppose the knowledge, the rise to which we must explain, or are mere potentialities, which cannot by themselves explain their passing into the actuality of conscious volition and life. To say that the transition in question does not originate either from the subject or from the object, either from the theoretical or from the practical, but from the Absolute, which is absolute relation of the two terms, and that " in the beginning was neither the Word nor the Act, but the Word of the Act and the Act of the Word," is, we must repeat it, playing with mythology. It is true of every man at his birth and in every moment of his life that his experience is characterised by succession: that before seeing he does not see and before thinking he does not think; how then does

man pass from mere potentiality into actuality? What does the cyclical character of spirit and the plurality of its two autonomous forms and four autonomous degrees amount to but to an attempt to mask and to evade the empirical fact that spirit is successive and that its last and supreme law is the Aristotelian and Scholastic law of potentiality passing into actuality under the stimulus of extra-subjective actualities? More than this. As De Ruggiero points out, the dialectic of the distincts and that of the opposites neutralise each other and we are left with a purely statical system. Nay, since the system must have some unity and we do not see how any form or degree can pass of itself over into any other, we are not even warranted in speaking of a system; they are juxtaposed, not organically united. Nor does it avail to invoke, as Croce does, Life as the deep Unity of knowledge and will, as the synthesis of all syntheses, the source of all problems, the unity of all distinctions, not resting in any of them, but ever going beyond them all. For, if so, the unity would fall outside the system. How could Life be the *raison d'être*, the momentum of transition from form to form and from degree to degree and the propounder of ever new problems, except by falling outside such forms and being inexhaustible by them? Is there ever an æsthetic experience expressive of all the actual life of the artist or a concept adequate to the full concreteness of the world of intuition and art? And if

not, have we not already transcended absolute idealism ?

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CHAPTER IV

THE "ACTUAL IDEALISM" OF GIOVANNI GENTILE

Summary.—The problem of Gentile's philosophy: the elimination of the last residuum of transcendence in Croce's philosophy: the derivation of multiplicity from unity—The reduction of knowledge and will to unity, and the reduction of all forms of experience to Philosophy—From Concrete Thinking to Nature, from Act to Fact—The notion of Spirit—Spirit as the one and true Individual—Criticism: is it true that Spirit is either everything or nothing at all?—Criticism of the reduction to one of Spirit as theoretical and as practical—of Gentile's notion of History—of Gentile's theory of values—The Transcendental Ego a useless abstraction—Historical and psychological prepossessions underlying Gentile's philosophy—Mysticism and idealism—Failure of Gentile's attempt to deduce Nature from Mind—Whence and why Process?—Gentile's treatment of Religion—A fatal dilemma and the realistic character of religious experience—Gentile's Ethics and Politics—Gentile as the philosopher of Fascism—A final appreciation of Italian Neo-Idealism—From Absolute relativity to Scepticism—The scepsis of Giuseppe Rensi.

THE essential task of Gentile's philosophy is to find a way out of the dilemma which Groce's philosophy leaves unsolved: if Spirit is a unity, whence the multiplicity of its distinct forms? And if these are given and not engendered, how can it be said to be a unity? In other words, how can unity and its distinctions both be equally real? So long as there is something merely *given*, *i.e.* something which has

not been shown to be necessarily engendered by mind, philosophy, Gentile would say, has not yet even begun to fulfil its task and its whole history would appear to be a meaningless one. There is no real knowledge so long as there is something not fully transparent, not merely to thought in general, but to my own thought, the only thought I know; and nothing will ever be transparent to my thought unless it be its own offspring. I only really know that of which I am myself the maker.

And yet the mere fact that we talk of knowledge would not be possible had we no idea of what knowledge actually is. Nay, the whole history of philosophy has been an ever-increasing deepening of our knowledge of what knowledge must be. We cannot help starting from the admission that thought, which is always the thought of something, is real, is something in itself. But, as we inquire into the implications of this admission we are gradually driven to realise that if the real is already both real and perfect independently of us, then there is no room for thought, for anything to be done by us; then our thinking and knowing are mere copying and mirroring, and knowledge comes only from without as the Absolute self-revelation *in ecstasis* of Plotinus. From this *negative* realisation we are gradually but irresistibly driven to the *positive* realisation that, if Spirit is to be something, reality must be relative to thought (Kant), and that its being in any way relative to thought implies its

ultimate identity with it (Hegel). In order that Spirit may be something it must be everything: either everything or nothing. And it does not matter in the least whether we conceive this identity of thought and being to be real in God only as in Berkeley, or in the Absolute beyond History as in Hegel. If the Real is only the *terminus ad quem* of my thinking and knowing, and determines from without my knowledge of itself, then the human subject as such counts for nothing, there is nothing, no real activity which he may call his own, consequently no freedom, no worth, no dignity in him. If we really care for the reality, worth, and freedom of Man, we must never lose sight of the fact that every judgment of ours, every affirmation, every denial, every reference to objects, whether material or spiritual, is possible only on the basis of my *I think*, of a concrete actual judgment and thinking of mine. There is no reality which can be affirmed otherwise than by an act of human thought. Even the thought of a reality independent of thought, of even my thought, is a thought of mine. This must be our starting-point and our only presupposition all along; it is from this that the whole multiplicity of experience must be shown to follow.

The first stage of Gentile's task is, naturally, the attempt to show that there is no real ground for the usual historical distinction between the theoretical and the practical form of spirit. The distinction

between *knowing* and *willing* arises from the contrast between some psychological states of mind which seem to presuppose the world to which they refer and other states which refer to a world they are creating. Knowledge seems to be merely contemplative; will merely practical and creative. We know *what is* and *how* it is; we do or make instead what so far is not yet and will be only owing to our doing or making it; or that which, though already existing, will thereby become something different and new. From the standpoint of knowledge the world neither grows nor decreases in being; from the standpoint of action it is becoming something more or new, it does not matter whether in a positive or a negative sense. In knowing man looks backwards on a world not of his own making or which he has ceased to make; in doing he is looking forward to a world he may create or is creating. For knowledge all is made; for action all is still to be made.

"But once we admit, with actual idealism, that the object of knowing is the subject himself looking, so to speak, into its own inwardness, thus realising ever anew himself by his own creative knowing, then, since Spirit is the only reality and its reality is its activity, the activity by which he knows is the very activity by which he is ever creating the world, that is, his own very self; and thus every knowing is a willing and every willing is a knowing, and Spirit appears as a knowing-doing creative activity."

The very words *theoretical* and *activity* become contradictory when juxtaposed.

Similarly, there is no room for a purely æsthetic or religious or scientific form of experience. If Spirit realises itself only as self-conscious thinking, to admit that there may be activities of any kind previous to the act by which I know them is to admit something transcending thought; on the other hand, the moment I take notice of them they lose their absoluteness; they become thought-dependent, they are no longer what they take themselves to be; apart from thought they resolve themselves in mere negations. Art, too, must be resolved into philosophy. And indeed Art, in the sense of this or that work of Art, has no history. Each work of Art is an individual, a world to itself, the solution of a particular æsthetic problem, with no relation to any other work of Art or æsthetic problem, even by the same artist: the solution of the problem of giving expression to a particular moment of the artist's personality. But when, in order to understand a given work of Art and to realise the artist's experience, we, by abstraction, sever, so to speak, the expression from the content, and study this content in relation to political, social, cultural history, and for this purpose set up picture-galleries and museums, what are we doing but restoring the artist's moment of artistic creation to its place in the stream of world-history?

The second stage of Gentile's task, which logically

follows from this criticism of all previous idealistic systems recognising the existence of distinct and autonomous form of experience, consists in the exhibition of how the seeming multiplicity of experience, and especially the dualism between mind and reality, springs from the unity of mind, nay, not of mind in general, but of *my* mind. If God or the Absolute or Nature are mere constructions and abstractions of my mind and therefore cannot be invoked to explain it, I shall have to start from my mind in order to explain even the mere appearance of a dualism between thought and some other kind of reality. Let us then start thinking.

We shall have immediately to discriminate between two things. The first is *concrete thought*, which is my present concrete act of thinking, a thinking which I cannot perform without deeming myself to be thinking the truth. This concrete thought or thinking is what Gentile calls *pensiero pensante*, *l'atto del pensare*, *cogitatio*, thinking which has not yet become itself object of thought and in which I have not yet differentiated the act of thinking from the content thought of; thought which is perfectly transparent to itself and in which subject and object are one. The second thing is *abstract thought*, which is past thought; thought which has been thought by myself or by somebody else; thought made object; thought which, owing to its having already been thought, cannot any longer be caught in its oneness with the thinking act which

first gave origin to it and in oneness with which it was concrete thought. This *abstract thought*, i.e. thought cut off through abstraction from the first concrete thinking of it, Gentile calls also *pensato*, *pensiero pensato*, *cogitatum*. This contrast between *concrete thought* or *thinking* and *abstract thought* is fundamental to Gentile's philosophy. The central kernel of this philosophy is the assertion that the subject, *i.e.* thought as thinking act, can never become object to itself. What thought, in fact, does grasp when it reflects upon itself is only a past moment of its own activity. Mind, as the defining, knowing activity, will never catch itself as defining and knowing, but only what it has defined and known. It may have an immediate knowledge of itself as mind in act, but not the knowledge that comes from reflectively setting anything before oneself. Gentile's idealism calls itself *actual* just because it starts from this initial concrete thinking act and proceeds to explain everything else as due to the movement from concrete thinking to abstract thought. Let us see how.

In a first moment, thought is always concrete, one with the act by which it is being thought; and as such carries within itself its own truth. Truth and reality are one and the same thing. We cannot be seriously thinking without believing in the truth of our thinking. And obviously even my own past thought or the thought of others become for me real *thought* and *true thought* when they be-

come concrete thinkings of mine. So that if this first moment were never overcome by another, we should know only our actual thought, we should never know of any thought of ours as past thought or as having been somebody else's thought. But this first moment of thinking is followed by another which destroys the actuality of our first thought; it makes it no longer the most present part of our present thinking; it makes it something different from it, though part of it, hereby bestowing upon it a *real objectivity*. That is to say, the earlier actuality of such thought, even though destroyed, is destroyed by a new act of thought, which at the same time renders concrete that objectivity of our past thought or of the thought of somebody else, which, so long as we did not make it concrete thinking of our own, remained purely abstract objectivity. In so far as this second moment of thought robs of its actuality the first, which thus no longer subsists in virtue of the thinking act which created it, but merely survives in and by the successive moment of thought now *actual*, such first moment of thought ceases to be real concrete thinking and becomes something other than actual thinking; from *act* it falls into *fact*, from Spirit, which is activity, into nature, matter, which is passivity. Nature is just only past thought, which living thought begins to consider as other than itself, forgetting in the end that it is its own offspring.

Nature is fossilised thought, the *débris* of the life

of thinking, its shadow and echo; it does not face us, it follows; and whatever reality it possesses is still conferred upon it only by an actual act of thinking. It is always the object of a thinking subject, an object which not merely exists *for*, but also is posited *by* a subject, created out of its very substance, memory and history. And why does each moment yield its place to another and engenders it from its bosom? Simply because Spirit is act, process; and process always implies identification and differentiation. It operates by creating distinctions within each moment and then by referring them again to itself as the subject, and thus creating the unity of the new moment in which they are preserved. Unity is ever growing into multiplicity and multiplicity is ever being resolved into unity. Spirit being act and process, each pulse of its life must be the negation of its predecessor and yet it must preserve the negation within a new affirmation: succession and difference follow from its very nature as Becoming, nay *are* the forms of *Becoming*.

Am I then the creator of the universe? Is each of us the creator not merely of his world but of the universe? To answer this question we must discriminate between the mere subject, the empirical ego or self, which is just the ordinary individual with a body, clothes, names, friends, social relations, the man that is distinct from other men and begins and ends in time, on the one hand, and Spirit or the Subject or the Transcendental Ego on the other.

Obviously the mere individual (myself as a mere ego among many others) is just only an object, a part of nature. But in so far as I know myself as an individual among many others, I am already something deeper than the self I know myself to be. My deeper ego is not the one I can describe and define, but it is my very describing and defining activity, the subject which never can be object just because it is the very condition of my thinking of objects at all: it is just this my thinking of objects. I can distinguish myself from others only by transcending myself and others, thus embracing within my unity all the differentiating particularities, which consequently appear to be mere objects like all other things and events. Similarly I can only be aware of changes in myself and in others if I am already something outside such changes, beyond time and space, above all distinctions of *here* and *there*, *before* and *after*. Our empirical personalities are real only as rooted in and unified by the Transcendental Ego, the Spirit, the Person that knows no plural.

And indeed what is it for human beings to know and love each other truly but to overcome their mutual otherness, to become one, the One, the Spirit? Every real communion between our interior life and that of others is essentially *unity*, a life of each *in* and *through* the others; otherwise we exist *for* but not *through* one another.

We are by now able to formulate the essential characteristics of Spirit. Spirit is first of all

subjective activity or actual subjectivity; it is the Subject in act or, even better, the *Subject as act.* Spirit is always concrete unity of intuition and concept, of knowledge and action. Spirit is *unity*, infinite and universal unity, since there is nothing outside its actuality which is its reality. Spirit is *freedom*, since there is nothing limiting it and, in contrast with so-called natural entities, whose becoming is limited and dictated by other external entities and rooted in the becoming of Spirit; and also and chiefly because *Becoming* is its very nature, so that in all its processes it owes allegiance only to itself. And in virtue of its nature as Becoming, Spirit is also *History* and is ever creating itself and its world and resolving both itself and its world into a deeper and richer subjective reality. And finally, Spirit as aware of its History and of Nature, *i.e.* of the abstractly objective world as being just its own objectivity, is *Philosophy*, the fullest self-consciousness of itself as a unity and a process in any of its historical positions. If there were other realities beyond Spirit, Spirit would not be free, its unity would be neither infinite nor universal and knowledge would not be its creation; Spirit would cease to be *activity*, it would really lapse into mere passive and worthless *nature*. There would be nothing for Man to do; his doing and knowing would be mere idle repetition. Spirit is creative and is everything or it is nothing.

This takes us to the final criticism passed by

Gentile on the theories of individuality peculiar to all realistic and dualistic philosophies. The idea of the reality of a multiplicity of individualities rests on that of the objectivity and independent reality of space and time. Once we admit that objects are posited *before* but not *by* the subject, each being is individualised by its situation in the midst of others, by its " where " and " when." Everything which is spatial or temporal necessarily resolves itself into points or moments each of which is outside all others. Consequently an individuality merely defined by its spatial and temporal situation would not be an individuality at all in any *spiritual* sense. It would not possess a reality wholly due to itself, but only one bestowed upon it by something external. A's being as an individual would consist merely in his not being B, not in anything positive in itself and self-posited. Therefore the only real individual is Spirit in its actual eternal process of self-differentiation and self-unification, in every moment of which universality and individuality perfectly coincide.

Thus through the resolution of all distinctions into the concrete unity of Spirit as self-conscious activity, whose only law, inherent in the very idea of Spirit as a process, is the Dialectic necessity, if there is to be process, that each moment, in preserving its predecessor within itself, yet should be its negation, does " Actual Idealism " offer itself as the supreme vindication of the freedom and worth of the human mind, since, on these lines, Man as

Spirit is his own world, and there is no world beyond Man.

Let us now, before proceeding further in the exposition of the historical, ethical and religious aspects of Gentile's philosophy, pause a little for the purpose of a critical examination of its logical basis thus far concisely formulated. And first of all let us examine its starting-point, the contrast in which it stands with every other philosophy, whether naturalistic or idealistic, infected with the Platonic assumption of the reality of a realm of truth and of intrinsic values standing above merely human opinion, likes and dislikes, and by participation in which alone, according to laws of which such a realm is the fountain-head, can human life be uplifted and reach its goal.

Gentile proclaims over and over again that we can only be and do something of value if nothing limits Spirit, if Spirit is everything and if everything is of its making. There is no other standpoint compatible with Kant's great discovery that everything we can think of as real presupposes our actual thinking of it, *is* this our thinking of it.

Now it is obvious that it is quite a different thing to say that I can only understand Shakespeare by a sympathetic insight of my own, which enables me to rekindle within myself the poet's world; and to say that I create Shakespeare's world thereby. It is not at all true that my re-creating Shakespeare's

world within myself is of no spiritual value; nor that to the extent to which I succeed in reproducing such a world I am merely repeating it and am acting not freely but enslaved to Shakespeare and his works. Between creating, as God is said to create, or as even a human author creates on the one hand, and mere mechanical and passive copying devoid of spiritual value on the other, there may be numberless degrees of not absolute but relative and yet real creation involving spiritual worth. Otherwise, how could we judge of the different measure of success of historians and critics in penetrating, for instance, the mind of different philosophers? We judge of one interpretation as more successful than another exactly to the extent it throws more light on links between thoughts of a philosopher or of different philosophers before and after him, links which we cannot help regarding as intrinsic and essential, as discovered and not as wrongly superadded by the interpreter. And it implies real intellectual worth and great moral power of sympathy and self-denial to become capable of such *objective* interpretations and re-creations. And is not our spirit, while thus engaged in reviving somebody else's experience, adding also to its own reality and even adding to and transfiguring the world it re-creates?

Besides, is ever knowledge, even for realists and dualists, a mere passive mirroring of the object by the subject? Is it true that it implies contradiction to qualify the noun *activity* by the adjective *theoretical?*

This would certainly be the case if *theoretical* is made in advance synonymous with *passive* and if knowledge owed, so to speak, its birth to the initiative of a purely external power. In fact, according to dualism, there is a relation between subject and object, and the object in each case, by acting as a stimulus on sense-organs, starts the process which will end in knowledge. But so long as we have to do with the mere action of stimuli and its reception by the senses there is no knowledge. When knowledge, even purely sense-knowledge, begins, we have to do with an active reaction of the subject the purpose of which is to seize and express the action of the object; a reaction which, just because of this, is the knowledge *of* the object *by* the subject and is felt to imply that opposition between the two which just expresses the external reality of the object. The subject is no passive mirror, just because it is neither wax nor water, but a *knowing* subject. Knowledge might, not improperly, be defined as creative only in the sense that by it the subject does not express the object in its pure objectivity, but in relation to himself, *i.e.* to a self which is in constant process of change and self-realisation. Owing to the human subject not being *pure act*, with no admixture of potentiality, he must be in process of constant transition from potentiality to act, and to this effect he requires external stimuli; but this does not prevent his activity, however relative, being really his own. Stimuli are necessary in order that the

subject may act; but their activity is insufficient to explain the nature of the reaction they provoke, which is wholly the subject's. The dilemma, "Spirit is everything or nothing at all," is therefore far from justified.

Our second point will turn on Gentile's destructive criticism of all philosophical theories of spirit admitting a plurality of given, distinct and autonomous forms of experience, and especially the duality between the theoretical and the practical. If the subject is not an entity (substance) but a process, an act, if the subject exists only as a self-conscious act of self-realisation, necessarily knowledge will be activity and activity will be knowledge; since a knowledge which was pure knowledge would not partake of such an act of self-realisation; and an activity which was pure activity would be blind, not self-conscious, not mind at all; therefore they cannot be two forms, but one.

Now this is inevitable only if we grant the uncriticised premise that the subject is pure *act*, nothing but *act*. But what follows from such a premise except that our author himself, as a matter of fact, conceives the subject not as *pure act* fully conscious of itself *as a whole*, and therefore above all mere succession, but as an act in everlasting process of becoming? And are not *subject as pure act* and *subject in eternal process of self-realisation*, the *subject as eternal* and the *act as successive*, contra-

dictory notions? Once we identify the subject, which is one, with its acts, which are many, the multiplicity and diversity of knowing and doing will have to be merely apparent or the subject will not be one. And thus we shall have, for instance, to blind ourselves to the fact that while (as in knowing) I cannot at the same time and under the same respect say that something is true and is not true, I can, on the contrary (in the world of action), love and cease to love and even forget my dog. Nor does actual idealism itself succeed in really abolishing this irreducible difference between the theoretical and the practical. Even for idealists the laws of thought and those of will are not the same. Even though in *knowing* an object I may be merely knowing myself as object, the fact remains that I cannot at the same time say that I am knowing and that I am not knowing it; while, on the contrary, if I am willing an object, even though this object be myself as object, I know I can will or cease to will it. Nay, even though with Gentile I may think that it is inward necessity that drives me to will it, it will not be possible for me at the same time to believe and disbelieve in the existence or possibility of such an object. The identity of the theoretical and the practical, therefore, far from being a truth of experience, is only the inevitable corollary of the *a priori* identification of the subject with the process of its activity, an identification essential to actual idealism but implying contradictions in its terms.

If, however, we discriminate between the subject as such and its acts there will be no difficulty in recognising at the same time the duality or the multiplicity of the forms of experience and the unity of their ground in the subject, since it is the same subject that realises itself through them all. Just as it is the same subject that feels through all senses and thinks and knows, so it is also the same subject that knows and wills.

Similar and other difficulties stand against Gentile's proposed "resolution of History, Art, Science and Religion into Philosophy," a resolution no doubt required by the logic of Actual Idealism. There is no difficulty in admitting that all these forms of experience must find room and explanation in Philosophy as the theory of experience in its systematic wholeness, of experience as the unity of all these its distinctions, each preserving within it all its characteristic features. But does Gentile's notion of Philosophy as the self-realising self-consciousness of the pure act of thinking as such and as author of all distinctions within its content leave room, for instance, for what we mean by History?

In every significant conception of History we must no doubt admit that the past is not cut off from the present; but is the past a mere projection of the present moment, a shadow or echo of it, as Gentile holds? How could we ever rise to the notion of the past if we did not already possess in our mind the intuition of a distinction between

before, *now*, and *after*; if in every experienced whole we did not already notice the *compresence* of a peculiarly living central zone, the *now* and the *new*, and outside it another zone, which, however living and bright, differs from the first as no longer present for the first time? How can we speak of a *real becoming*, which does not presuppose the distinctions of *before* and *after*, and which therefore does not find but creates these distinctions? A Becoming which is an eternal *now*, above temporal succession, is a contradiction in terms.

History is nothing if it be not this simultaneous experience of successive moments, each excluding the others from its own place in concrete psychical duration, yet organically bound up with them. History is the past in the present, the unity-in-distinction of past and present, not their sheer identity, but a synthesis of subjective and objective elements no less than any sense-perception. The true historian is he who in the light of his present and living experience recreates anew and clothes with life the past which he does not create but finds in himself. He does not alter but scrupulously respects, and only restores the past to life as far as possible, and restores it only as past *in* and *for* the present. He never attempts the fusion of the two or the deduction of either from the other. Were it not so, whence the necessity for documents and their interpretation? If there are no real distinct personalities, if the only reality is the Transcendental

Ego as the self-consciousness of the eternal act of thinking, how is it that only through words and gestures do we know the thoughts and experiences of our friends and that our memory is powerless to conjure up the whole history of humanity and that documents are needed to this effect? How is it that there are historical gaps and discoveries and that there is progress in the art and science of history? If the only Real is the One Eternal Subject, is not the very existence of History impossible? On the other hand, if History be not the mere identity but the unity-in-distinction of past and present, and if there be an historical as well as a natural objectivity, Philosophy cannot be, as Gentile would have it, the self-consciousness of the Absolute in Man and *as* Man. A difference would have to be acknowledged between Philosophy as Man's consciousness of the Absolute as the final Goal of his experience on the one hand, and a possible self-consciousness of the Absolute in himself on the other hand; a difference between our imperfect, progressive and always approximate knowledge of reality, and reality as it would be in itself and as it would appear to its own intuition.

Gentile's philosophy seems likewise unable to resolve into Philosophy Praxis as the world of *Values*, viz. to overcome the dualism of existence and worth. What are Values? There is no event or object in our experience towards which we can assume an

attitude of perfect indifference; we either consider it important or unimportant; we desire it or not; we will it as good or shrink from it as evil. Worth arises, therefore, from practical necessities and attitudes; it implies the referring of events or objects to a subject as an end or value in itself, such as ultimately we find only in personality. The value of personality is identical with the realisation of perfect harmony between all its constituent elements, sense-elements as well as spiritual, *i.e.* with happiness. Now, we know already that in Gentile's philosophy there is no room for a real plurality of personalities, but only for the Transcendental Ego, the Person that has no plural. Consequently intrinsic value is denied to empirical personalities; these can only be ephemeral vehicles of values, and the only real value is Spirit, the Transcendental Subject as Act, of which we are only just momentary pulsations. And why? While Nature differs from Spirit in being contingent, in requiring Spirit as its necessary foundation and possessing therefore no intrinsic value, Spirit owes its reality to an intrinsic necessity: we cannot, without contradiction, think that thought ever was or ever could be inexistent. Therefore in the pure act of thinking the ideal and the real, the *ought* and the *is*, freedom and necessity, are one. Therefore each act as such is goodness and truth, without any opposition or approval from something else in contrast with which it may seem evil or error. The only opposition is that between

concrete thinking and past thought or *abstract thought*, between present and past, between *act* and *fact*. The present is ever good and true, merely through its being a new act of self-realisation; it is to linger in it that turns it into evil and error; and the past itself is good and true only in so far as made subservient to the new creative act.

Now, the truth that mind alone is necessary and self-subsistent, in the sense that the very denial of its necessity and self-subsistence implies contradiction, may, at the utmost, lead us to conceive reality as necessarily an historical process, since, in order to persist in being, mind must ever become something different, in every moment, from what it was before and pass from act to act and phase to phase of life indefinitely. But this dialectical necessity, this *must*, can never by itself be turned into the ground for an *ought*. Mere necessary existence can never be the foundation of worth or coincide with it. Especially in a philosophy for which there is no nature confronting spirit, dialectical necessity cannot help losing, but in name, every spiritual character and becoming identical with natural necessity.

Moreover, it is the contrary of truth to assert that error is merely past truth and evil merely past goodness, and that it is the fact of passing that turns the truth of to-day into the error of to-morrow and to-day's goodness into to-morrow's evil. We all, as Croce remarks, looking back upon our past experiences, distinguish very clearly between the things

which, however poor, served as stepping-stones to our present truths and those that were mere blunders and pseudo-thoughts; between those about which our conscience is at peace and those that still make us feel ashamed. Above all, it is not true that when we think and act, that is to say, when, as we cannot help doing, we realise ourselves, we are thereby thinking truth and practising goodness whatever we may be thinking and doing—it is not true that a given thought is true because we think it or a given deed is good because we will it in the course of that process of self-realisation which is our reality. In such case each act, were it not followed by others, or in so far as not yet followed by others, would appear to be absolute truth and goodness merely because it is the last!

And how does pain come in, in this philosophy? "Our pains as such, as pains of the empirical ego, have neither worth nor unworth, since they do not touch the transcendental ego, which is pure passionless act. Our real life is not the mixture of pleasure and pain, of unsatisfied desires, of the worry and boredom entering into and following after all pleasure; our real life is the contemplation of that scene which is our life, more painful than pleasurable, of to-day and yesterday; we are the *awareness of this suffering*, and in this awareness pain loses its bitterness. While mere suffering as such is a mere form of passiveness and therefore cannot, without contradiction, be attributed to Spirit, which is *act*,

the suffering of which we are aware in this *awareness of suffering* is not the act of the present actual ego, but the act of the ego as it now appears to us to have been before becoming aware of its suffering. In other words, while aware of my suffering I am already above it, and as at every moment I am, through this awareness, above my suffering, mere suffering as such is a sheer abstraction projected into the past and has never been real." (*Sommario di Pedagogia*, Vol. I, p. 38.) But how can I ever become conscious of a pain that has never been real? Why should it ever *seem* to us that we have suffered something which in fact has never been? In what way can I make an object of contemplation what was previously inexistent? And, since the transcendental ego is always all that it can be, all that it ought to be and all that it must be, what could pain be before the ego became aware of it? In a word, there is no room for pain. In so far as there is room for it as an ingredient in the panorama of life eternally being contemplated by the passionless Subject, it has neither more nor less meaning and worth than pleasure. The Eternal Subject realises himself equally well through pain and pleasure, joy and sorrow, smiles and tears. All human events are equally good and bad, equally instrumental to that self-realisation of Mind which *must* be, since Mind *cannot not be* and therefore must always *become*. There is, therefore, no real difference, in regard to Values, between naturalism, the

supreme law of which is the conservation of matter and energy through their everlasting redistributions and transformations in space and time, on the one hand, and actual idealism, the supreme law of which is the Spirit's self-preservation through self-renewal, on the other. In both cases Time and Becoming are merely the means through which eternal Being preserves itself in its aimless and worthless eternity. In neither there is real room for *values*. Values always presuppose the possibility of real voluntary effort to realise them, and there cannot be voluntary effort where there is no dualism between subject and object, and, on the one hand, there are no real finite personalities, and, on the other hand, the only real Subject is one who cannot help perfectly realising himself in whatever moment of his life whatever he does ; and thus the world's history is reduced to a game where the Universal Subject is at once the two opposing teams of players, the rules and the play !

Thus we have already implicitly passed our criticism on Gentile's distinction between the empirical and the transcendental ego. We have already seen how if the transcendental ego be the only Real, there is room no longer for real History or real social and moral life or real education : since not only there is no room for the distinct personalities of pupils and teachers, but also there is nothing to be taught and learned, Spirit being at every moment all that it can and ought to be, yet

busily engaged in learning from itself and teaching itself all that it has been eternally learning and teaching! But it will not be useless to show that Gentile's notion of the transcendental self shares with that of most Idealists the fate of being a mere useless abstraction. In order that I may differentiate myself from other selves and be able to survey successive changes in them and in myself, it is not at all necessary for me to be, in my deeper being, a Subject transcending space and time and all empirical personalities. It is quite sufficient that at every moment I am able to discriminate, within the totality of a given experienced situation, certain elements characterised by a peculiar and intimate warmth and belonging to one and the same self, from others not thus characterised, not therefore belonging to one self and consequently capable of being interpreted only as belonging to other selves. Moreover, in every such experienced whole we distinguish a central nucleus of immediate and new experience, peculiarly and actually alive—the *now*—and a surrounding zone of *no longer new*, less defined experiences, constituting *the past*. While these two considerations are adequate to explain our ability to discriminate between ourselves and others, the hypothesis of the transcendental ego renders it inexplicable that we should need words and gestures to understand each other and that each of us cannot remember other people's experiences or the whole history of mankind.

Moreover, the relations between the empirical and the transcendental ego in Gentile's philosophy are far from clear. On the whole they are said to be the same as those between subject and object, intuition and concept in the ordinary *a priori synthesis* of perception. If so, we are confronted by the following dilemma. Either the relation is the same in both cases or it is not. If it is, then in such a synthesis the Empirical, though indwelling in the Transcendental, does not cease to be empirical; and the Transcendental, conversely, though indwelling in the Empirical, does not cease to be transcendental; and if so, the *one ego* we know is just this synthetic unity of ideal elements and sense elements: the soul in experience. If instead the relation is not the same, if the Transcendental is the only real individual, then there is no synthesis; and we have therefore to choose between considering the Transcendental as a mere abstraction, since it is outside such a synthesis, or as being conditioned by the Empirical if it exists only in synthesis with it. In fact, while Gentile thinks he has eliminated transcendence, his Transcendental subject is just *the transcendent itself*. If the subject can never, as such, become the object of knowledge; if it can never be the object of a reflective existential judgment, how do we even know of its reality? Is it not the same as the Unknowable and the Ineffable?

It is the same dilemma that confronts every form of idealism in face of the problem of solipsism: the

Absolute is either Unknowable or Knowable. If it is unknowable, how can we know of its existence? If it is knowable, it must fall within the experience of individual beings, and therefore it cannot afford any evidence for the existence of anything or anybody outside my individual experience. As Gentile thinks the Absolute to be knowable, *i.e.* that the Absolute is just the Transcendental Ego as self-conscious act in eternal process of self-realisation, it follows that Gentile, too, is unable to go beyond the self-consciousness of such an Absolute in individual experience. Moreover, if so, how is it that the ordinary mind of mankind, which would not be mind were it not self-conscious, has come to believe in a plurality of Egos, to differentiate certain contents of experience as *spatial* from others that are *temporal* and is not conscious of these distinctions as due to its own initiative? Gentile seems to think that individualities differentiated from one another only by their temporal and spatial relations would cease to be *ipso facto* spiritual, and that the reality of space and time would imply a mere multiplicity of beings with no necessary relations to one another and therefore incapable of constituting an intelligible world: so that only the hypothesis of the Transcendental Single Self as *Act* would save Spirit in the world both as reality and as value.

We have already pointed out, however, that the existence of a plurality of things and subjects acting as stimuli upon one another is no obstacle to the

reality of genuine, though relative, spiritual initiative and freedom in each, and we would point out now that there is no reason why unity and multiplicity should not go together in a really objective world as they go together in the experience of each subject. If we do not accept the solipsist position, that each of us is the one reality and the whole universe, then we must admit something transcending the present act of thinking. If there be more than a single Ego, then there are mutually transcendent subjects each entering the experience of the others as an object, and in such a case there is no more difficulty in granting the reality of things than in granting the reality of other subjects and the rationality of the whole system as rooted in a Mind transcending the system and its members. Either the world is intelligible to me because it is my very self and I am its author, or it is intelligible because it is the expression of some other mind than my own.

What is it then that drives Gentile and many kindred minds to speak and write as if it were essential for the intelligibility of the world and the freedom and dignity of the human mind that the human mind itself should be the world's creative source? Once again we find ourselves face to face with the already discussed assumption that Spirit must be all or nothing, and that Man as Spirit must be the very self-consciousness of the world and the whole universe the living garment woven by

the human spirit as it passes unceasingly from infinite potentiality to infinite actuality, or, rather, from pure act to pure act, from perfection to perfection. It is an assumption which we already saw to be quite gratuitous. We must show now how it runs counter to some among the deepest and highest human experiences.

We cannot do better than quote some words from Principal John Caird's wonderful University Sermon on "The New Birth," itself as a whole a decisive refutation of the standpoint under discussion. "How from their very nature can spirit rule spirit, one mind master and dominate another? . . . Think of what you mean by the power of mind over mind. When we recall the names of the few master minds whose works have surpassed the lapse of ages and who still in our day, as we say, *rule us from their urns*, what is the secret of their nameless, measureless power? What but this, that these men, while they rule us, make us free; that there are in us hidden springs of thought which they unseal, dumb inarticulate instincts for which in their words we find a voice; slumbering aspirations, longings, gropings after light, which at their magic touch leap to life?" In other words, do we not find in the uplifting emancipating control of lesser by higher minds the best refutation of the untruth that spiritual life is stifled by anything coming from above and from without, the best proof that the wiser those who control us are, the truer and the more real

is our freedom? Likewise, when does a scientist or a philosopher or an artist or a prophet feel at his best and freest? Surely it is when he feels himself not so much the utterer of truth as rather its mouthpiece, and when he is caught up by something higher than himself and loses and forgets himself in it. Perhaps we are not far from truth in thinking that, while experiences such as these reveal in its elementary form the feeling of transcendence at its best, the experience of the abuse of authority and power by stronger minds over weaker, by Governments and ecclesiastical authorities over individuals and races, reveals the source of that purely rebellious, purely negative notion of freedom which is at the root of all purely immanentist philosophies and also of Gentile's assumption that Spirit is real if it is all, and that Man possesses worth only if he is God *as Man*. If so, immanentism and actual idealism would be a merely negative historical reaction to historical perversions of that experience of transcendence which we all have in loving some cause or person more than ourselves, and which is deeper than all the perversions to which it is liable and necessary to explain these.

Surely Wordsworth was right in saying that it is most natural for man to live by "admiration, hope, and love," and, far from feeling miserable, we are glad to be lowly wise, to be spending ourselves on behalf of great issues, to feel that we are not, happily, the whole and that there is something or somebody

not ourselves to be thankful to and to serve and praise. It is not, therefore, a misrepresentation to say that the philosophy we are criticising ignores or discredits some of the noblest human instincts and is the theoretical expression of a type of character rich in arrogant self-assertion and such as not many would like to see widely spread.

We have so far shown that the dilemma, " Spirit is everything or it is nothing at all," is far from valid, and that the reduction of all forms of experience to the simple identity of the pure concrete act of thought in which the transcendental ego realises itself is neither necessary nor possible if our purpose is to gain a systematic view of experience as a whole. We must now show, further, that such a reduction would be the suicide of Philosophy.

Gentile is fond of insisting on the differences between mysticism and idealism. " Both agree that all things are one and that knowledge consists in reaching the one reality through its distinctions. But while mysticism ends in the dark night of the soul, in *cancelling* all distinctions and even in losing sight of the very self-consciousness of the subject, idealism does not destroy, but only resolves all distinctions, and in the unity which it affirms it preserves differences as well as identity." But what is the difference between mystical *cancellation* and idealistic *resolution* if all distinctions are resolved into the concrete pure thinking act as such ? If

Art, Science, Action, Religion, etc., concretely considered, are Philosophy, are identical in that they all are spiritual activity, how do we ever come to distinguish them? How can an act of thought differ from another and distinctions arise from within pure identity if there is nothing but the thinking act as such, and if thought is not already a unity-in-distinction and a system of forms? What is Gentile's *pensiero pensante*, or pure act, as source of history and of all distinctions, but another name for the Hegelian "*night in which all cows are black?*"

Still, our criticism would remain vitally incomplete if we did not attempt a direct analysis of Gentile's deduction of the multiplicity of experience, and especially of the dualism of nature and spirit, of truth and error, of goodness and evil, from the process of thought. Once we admit with Croce and Gentile that to explain my mind by appealing to Nature or God or to the Absolute beyond History is to explain the concrete through the abstract, it is obvious that there is no other alternative for Philosophy but to show how everything can be derived from this present thinking act of mine. And, we saw, Gentile starts on his great venture by making the fundamental distinction between *concrete thinking* and *abstract thought*. Concrete thinking, or the transcendental Subject in act, is in itself truth and reality; in it the act of thinking and the content thought of have not yet been severed through abstraction; the two are perfectly

transparent to each other: the object or the meaning of the thinking act is just one with the act that thinks it. But such an act, we saw, cannot be an object to itself; and, being the act by which time and space and the world of objects are created, it is outside both time and space. It comes to knowledge of itself only indirectly and by return, so to speak, when, in a second moment, a second act of thinking turns the first moment into its own object: what we know is not *thinking* in itself, but *thought* (*cogitatum*). The expelling of the content of the first act of thinking by the second, its being turned into an object and its becoming nature, would be the means through which we, imprisoned within the cave of our mind, to use Plato's famous myth, come to infer the existence of the Sun (the Transcendental Ego) from the shadows it sheds on the screen of the past, and which we recognise as just only shadows.

Now the idea that the subject cannot become an object to itself is only the result of forgetting the character of duration, of continuity of consciousness in time. The subject's life is not concentrated, so to speak, in an extra-temporal instant, but is *enduring*, and an essential mark of consciousness is that of being transparent to itself during its very process. It is thus the opposite of truth to say that the self known through *reflection* cannot be the thinking subject in his immediate concrete actuality. Gentile's assertion that the knower cannot know himself as knower rests on the gratui-

tous raising of a grammar-analysis into a philosophic one. There is, therefore, no necessity for the subject to pass from concrete thinking to abstract thought and to the creation of a world of objects in order to become aware of himself. The process of conscious experience does not in the least require for its development that from a given moment it should pass to its negation, but only that there should be different moments and that these should be unified in the subject of experience. It might go on indefinitely as a pure conscious process without any need to create for itself the reality or the illusion of a transcendent reality. Actual idealism, therefore, neither tells us how we know of the existence of the transcendental subject, nor how we come to have the illusion of an independent reality. Nor does it explain how we ever pass from concrete thinking to abstract thoughts. Even abstract thoughts, to exist, must exist as concrete thinkings: either they exist as thinkings or they are nothing at all. To explain the reality or the illusion of an independent reality Gentile must, following on the steps of Fichte, invoke a kind of momentary self-forgetfulness on the part of the subject and suppose that spirit can create objects without knowing it or forget that it has created them. But can there be room for unconsciousness in a system of which self-conscious thinking is the beginning and the end? Either actual idealism is true and there is no room for even the illusion of

independent reality; or independent reality is an illusion engendered by a momentary loss of consciousness in the subject, and then there are activities which may exist independently of the *I think* of the subject himself.

Nor is this all. Whence the necessity of a second thinking act after the first? It is no answer to say that mind is intrinsically process, a continual synthesis of individuality and universality, individuality ever universalising itself, universality ever individualising itself. For we are hereby left wholly in the dark as to the reason why the process goes on after the initial self-particularisation of the universal and self-universalisation of the particular. If Spirit is always act, infinite and whole in each moment, surely *process* is merely a name for endless repetition. If each act of thinking thinks the whole universe, the whole subject and the whole object, it is impossible to see what we gain by mere repetition. Surely the whole cannot add to itself by ever repeating itself, and it is quite meaningless to call this repetition a progress. Can we say that a man is progressing if he is merely walking along a path the end of which, if there is an end, is wholly unknown to him? And, last but not least, is not this pure act, which is pure becoming, by now revealed as identical with static pure being?

Gentile is fond of repeating that in all philosophies assuming the reality of either God or Nature or both as independent of our knowledge of them, the human

mind and its processes, falling on this side of the already perfect transcendent goal, are deprived of all real initiative and worth and thus knowledge and life, as not creative of their objects, are turned into idle, worthless and inevitably imperfect copies of the eternal pattern. He is fond of repeating that there is no possible way of deducing the finite concrete actual world from the transcendent and perfect Absolute. But surely this difficulty crops up again in his own system as the impossibility of conceiving a transition from concrete to abstract thought and of finding a *raison d'être* for the endless repetition of moments of a process each moment of which is perfect in itself, equally good and equally bad, equally true and equally false, equally far from and equally near to the goal of the eternal and endless process! Gentile has merely *immanentised* the old transcendent Absolute by identifying it with each moment and act and, at the same time, with the whole process of experience, and has merely transferred to experience the mystery of the origin and perpetuation of the process. In all philosophies more or less infected with Platonism and even in Hegel there may be mystery in the derivation of the world from an Absolute. But there ought to be no room in *absolute*, and especially in "*actual Idealism*," as a thoroughly dialectical philosophy, for which everything should appear deducible from a self-evident principle that cannot be denied without self-contradiction. If I am the author of the world

I know, how can there still be anything opaque to the thinking by which I make it? Why do I need documents to reconstruct the past, and why am I unable to apprehend directly other people's thoughts as if they were my own and conjure up and gather in a single intuition the whole past of the world?

The crux of Italian Neo-Idealism, as of every kind of Absolute Idealism is, however, its treatment of Religion. According to Hegel's philosophy, as we know, the validity of knowledge implies that it is only through a system of concepts that Religion can be shown to be truth and not a mere subjective intuition or emotion. It follows that Religion is resolved into Philosophy. But, while there is one sense in which even religious thinkers have in the past admitted and might admit to-day that Religion and Philosophy coincide, *i.e.* that Philosophy culminates in the proof of the independent reality of the Object of religious experience, this is not the sense in which such a coincidence is interpreted by consistent followers of the Hegelian tradition. If we come to the conclusion that knowledge cannot be the apprehension by the subject of the independent reality of the object and can only be the apprehension by the subject of himself *as* object, then even the religious object can only be the subject *as* object. Religion would be true in the sense that Philosophy agrees with it in affirming the all-sovereign reality of Spirit; but would not be the whole truth in the

sense that for Philosophy God, the Spirit, would not be a Reality separate from and other than the human spirit. It would be this very human spirit as conscious of its own identity with absolute Spirit. Philosophy would be the moment and act by which in man spirit knows itself as Spirit, as Subject positing himself as Object. Man would be the world's self-consciousness.

Croce and Gentile, however, achieve this resolution of Religion into Philosophy in different ways. For Croce's general theory of Spirit as a self-contained system of recurrent autonomous forms of experience, Spirit must at any moment be, if theoretical, either an intuition or a concept; if practical, either a useful or a good deed. There is, therefore, no room for a specific religious experience. In so far as Religion is a fact it can only be a hybrid combination of the above-mentioned forms, which sooner or later will by reflection be resolved into its constituent elements. In so far as Religion is theoretical it is either implicit philosophy expressing itself through artistic symbols, *i.e.* mythology; or it is Art, as in liturgy and worship. In so far as practical it is either morality or economics, as in acts of propitiation.

Obviously, this is a purely external view of Religion. Not only does it fall together with the philosophical theory of Spirit, of which it is a particular application, but it also fails to explain why these elementary and autonomous forms of experience

should ever feel the need to combine in a hybrid form of life; a form, on the contrary, characterised by such wonderful and consistent unity of character as we see exemplified in saints, prophets, religious heroes, whom we find worshipped just because they appear to be incarnations and revelations not of a hybrid but of an ideal personality.

Gentile's view of Religion, though sharing with that of Croce the fundamental notion that in Religion man is merely contemplating his own spirit idealised, is far deeper and intimately connected with his theory of Spirit as essentially self-realising act. Spirit is always, so to speak, becoming aware of itself as subject, going out of itself to itself as object and returning to and knowing itself as the living synthesis of both. In the first of these moments, when it awakens, as it were, from its (purely logical but never real) condition of dumb and empty immediacy, in order to start on its process of self-realisation, Spirit is Art, and knows itself as absorbed in its dreams, as creating a world wholly its own, utterly unrelated to any historical or natural objectivity, and as celebrating its individuality.

Religion is just this second moment, that in which Spirit discovers itself *as object*; therefore the absolute otherness of the object as *object* fills its mind with its novelty and obscures the consciousness that the object is none other but mind itself. Hence Man forgets himself, annihilates himself before his

object, which, thereby assuming a character of absoluteness, stands out as God. God is all that the spirit knows while not knowing itself; God is the object taken apart from its relation to the subject, and thereby clothed with the characters of absoluteness and infinity. God is, therefore, also, by this very fact, the unutterable, nay, the Unknowable One, the *Deus Absconditus*, the true God of all religions, the expression of the agnosticism lying at the root of all of them. Hence Gentile asserts that it is man's self-oblivion and self-annihilation which turns the object of human knowledge into God's transcendent reality; furthermore, that such self-oblivion and self-annihilation, not the affirmation of such transcendent object, should be regarded as the most deeply religious among the elements of Religion.

But as even this self-annihilation is an act of the subject, Mind will not linger in the religious moment any more than it stopped in the artistic moment. Just as there is a religious element essential to all Art, which bends the true artist in adoration before the offspring of his genius and drives him out of his lyrical subjectivity into Religion, so there is an æsthetic element essential to all Religion, which prevents an utter self-annihilation and acts as bridge to the higher subjectivity of Philosophy, to the recognition that the Object, God, is mind itself *as* object.

We shall make just only two comments. The first

comment turns on the fact that after having defined Art as essentially the subject's self-expression in contrast with Religion as the affirmation of the absolute reality of the object, Gentile, with his afterthought on the religious character of Art and the æsthetic character of Religion, abolishes every distinction between the two. Nor does it avail him to say that, by denying the practical possibility of pure Art and of pure Religion, we are merely denying that their reality is ever perfect. For is not, according to Actual Idealism, at every moment the whole reality adequate to the ideal? We are, therefore, left quite in the dark as to how we pass from Art to Religion.

The second and even more important point is that Gentile's theory of Religion as the moment of absolute objectivity in the eternal cycle of the Spirit's activity lands us in the following inexorable dilemma. Either man really and completely denies himself and loses himself in the object and, in such a case, there can be for him no resurrection, and human history should have come to an end long ago; or man survives, and consequently survives as knowing his object and as capable of knowing any number of objects. In such a case the idea of God as absolute and infinite Object, which, according to Gentile, arises only through the subject's complete self-annihilation in the Object, should never arise. But the idea of God does, in fact, arise, and therefore the essence of

Religion cannot be the subject's self-annihilation and can only be the subject's affirmation of the Object as infinite and absolute.

Consequently there is no possibility left for any further movement of experience towards the recognition of this Object as merely a projection of mind, and Philosophy, far from being the human awareness of the infinity and absoluteness of the spirit that is in man and is his true self, viz. the Transcendental Ego eternally engaged in realising himself as his own object (just as Aristotle's God lives by thinking his own thought), can only be the recognition, by the human subject, of the infinity and absoluteness, hence of the *otherness*, of the Object of religious experience.

Religion, far from being the sphere of experience which best lends itself to an idealist interpretation expressed by the motto *Esse est percipi et intelligi*, is essentially realistic. While we can think of our tables, cups and saucers as wholly passive in respect of our knowledge of them, we cannot think of God as being known by us in spite of Himself. We can only think of Him as self-revealing, as the only real cause of our knowing Him. This is an irreducible character of religious experience against which every purely idealistic interpretation breaks down. Gentile himself admits after all that the subject has not so lost himself really and completely in his object as not to emerge again from it. Nay, more. "There is no spirit so full of God, so per-

vaded by the emotion of the divine which is pure objectivity, but feels driven to convey its emotion and conviction, to attribute to itself the capacity to do and be something on its own account, to weave theological syllogisms on the truths it owes to superior Grace. . . . And the more ardent faith is, the deeper the feeling of one's unreality and of God's all-inclusiveness, the mightier is the spiritual energy of the subject engaged in creating such situations."

Surely he hereby recognises it to be untrue that the reality of the object and especially that of God crushes the human subject ! Gentile, however, is grossly mistaken in thinking that saints and prophets draw their strength from the feeling of their unreality. Even a cursory glance at mystical and religious literature would teach him that they are conscious of drawing strength not from what they are not, but from what they are in conjunction with God's grace; *i.e.* from their capacity and constant effort to become worthy vehicles of the ever-pressing Divine Presence. Some of the greatest historical revolutions, some of the most enduring institutions, such as the Church and many religious orders, are due to this conviction, which is interwoven with the whole of history. If Gentile is right, we must consider history as *par excellence* the realm of the irrational and deem victims of illusion some of the greatest friends of man of all the ages.

Gentile, of course, would say that Philosophy

does not destroy Religion, but only displaces the interpretation which Religion gives of itself; that the capacity of Spirit to create and to perform all it has hitherto achieved is independent of our interpretations, and that by rising above obsolete and purely mythological interpretations, by recognising, for instance, that the dogma of God's omnipotence is a purely figurative expression for the reality and sovereignty of that Spirit which we know pre-eminently in human life and history, we make all past and present spiritual truths and conquests independent of arbitrary elements and establish on surer foundations the intrinsic freedom and dignity of man.

To discuss this we must pass to Gentile's conception of Christianity. According to him, the specific Christian element is not the cosmic theological background which Christianity shares with Hellenism, nor in particular the idea of a transcendent Deity which it shares with Platonism, but the idea of Spirit as creative of goodness and truth. According to Gentile, in Jesus' words, "*Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done*," in the Parable of the Mustard Seed, in the idea of faith as capable of moving mountains, in the solemn sentence, "*The Kingdom of God is within you*," we grasp the germinal notion of modern post-Kantian, and especially of Hegelian and of Italian Idealism, the notion of a Realm of the Spirit, which, far from existing in Heaven in a condition of already realised perfection, awaits

its realisation through human effort and initiative alone. We shall not waste time and space in criticising this utterly arbitrary interpretation of early Christianity and its Founder beyond saying that it was certainly not as a mere philosophy but as trust in a Person that Christianity achieved its victory over kindred and rival philosophies and religions in the ancient world. We shall instead point out that Gentile himself repeatedly shows the impossibility of severing Ethics from Metaphysics, and specifically recognises the impossibility of severing the purely ethical doctrine of Jesus from his faith in other-world realities and his general other-world outlook. Yet Gentile's philosophy leaves no room for either a Father such as Jesus thoroughly believed in, or a Heavenly Kingdom, or a triumph over death on the part of human personality, no room, therefore, for Christian ethics historically worthy of the name. We may even ask whether there is room in it for Ethics at all.

I. In Gentile's system the subject, or the spirit, is free, not in the sense of being free to choose between two different objects of volition, but in the sense that the subject *is* in so far as he realises himself *in* and *as* the process of his acts. It is a contradiction in terms to say that spirit, as such, *is* or possesses a given constitution or nature. Spirit is always making its nature, nor is anything being presupposed by the act whereby it realises and con-

tinually creates itself. Spirit is freedom *qua* spirit; freedom is the very law of its being. Now, let us not stop to inquire whether spirit can at the same time, as Gentile holds, be subject, infinite and absolute subject (in which case it would have to be pure act consciously possessing its own wholeness and therefore above succession), and also the process of transition from one self-realisation to another without any law controlling the process. To us the thing is simply unthinkable. Let us rather grant the point. It will follow that there is no room for the distinction, which even Gentile admits, between good and evil, between acts which appear to us good, *i.e.* such as they ought to have been, or bad, *i.e.* against the law to which they should have conformed (*Sommario di Pedagogia*, Vol. I. Part I. xiii). If there is law, then something is presupposed by the process, and "actual" idealism crumbles to pieces; if there is no law, then every act is as good as any other, since every act is self-realisation, *auto-farsi*; every act is good while being performed; bad as soon as done, as soon as from *act* it falls into *fact*.

II. There is no room, we already know, in Gentile's system for a plurality of personalities; the only reality admissible without any presupposition, and therefore compatible with the reality of freedom, is the Transcendental Ego as the world's self-consciousness. It follows that there will be no room for individual liberty and personality in

Gentile's philosophy of politics. The true reality and freedom of the individual is that which he gains by losing himself in his family, his state, humanity. "My personality is not suppressed, but uplifted, strengthened, enlarged by being merged and restored in that of the family, the State, the Spirit." Here, obviously, Gentile loses sight of the fact that the family, the State, the social group, humanity are only *notions* defining relations between men, different notions concerning different groupings of men, which are called moral or legal personalities (*personæ fictæ*) only metaphorically and by analogy with man as he exists in the concrete, who is the only real self-conscious personality endowed with powers of practical initiative. It is only by neglecting these essential differences that Gentile can speak of the individual and the State as essentially one and of the State as "the very essence of individual initiative." It escapes his attention that, according to his premises, this identity of the State with the individual can be maintained only in two ways: either by regarding the State as a concrete unity of which individuals are merely members, in which case these lose their personality; or by thinking of both as mere phenomena, in which case the State also remains without personality of its own. And, in fact, Gentile is far from consistent. Elsewhere and more recently he speaks of the State "as expressing a will and an interest superior to the will and interest of single individuals." Surely, if the

individual has still a will and an interest, however unimportant, the individual and the State are far from being one, as was previously asserted. And the distinction between the two is further emphasised when Gentile speaks of "force as being moral when used to urge the interior assent of the individual," and says that "every force is moral force in so far as capable of influencing the will, whatever be the argument applied, the sermon or the cudgel." (From a speech delivered in Palermo, March 1924.) We have gone a long way since Gentile, as a professor of education, wrote: "Will cannot be compelled from without to realise itself. An education which in any way compels or drives to the good may obtain the material execution, the abstract actualisation of it, not the act which *is* the good." (*Antonio Rosmini, Il Principio della Morale*, Osservazione 4, by Gentile.) Gentile goes still further. He claims that "German and Italian thought have engendered a new liberalism which recognises as a real and free individual only the one in whom the superior interest of the community and the sovereign will of the State are pulsing. This new liberalism is a collective movement; an idea animating a whole mass, an idea which has become passion, because it is the energetic self-expression of a whole personality; it is this very personality which in its universal human value becomes a centre of spiritual irradiation."

Now this is no mere exuberant rhetoric, no mere

echo of Sorel's syndicalist psychology as expounded in his *Réflexions sur la violence*, and assimilated by the philosopher of Italian Nationalism and Fascism. Once we cease to admit finite personalities as such and consider them only as historical positions of the one Absolute, Infinite, Free Spirit, which creates and uses them merely as means to its ceaseless self-realisation, it is inevitable that everybody with intense convictions and aspirations should yield to the temptation to consider himself as the last and best self-realisation of the World-Spirit. He inevitably tries either to shape the State and the world according to his views or to celebrate the State in which his views are temporarily realised as the last authoritative self-revelation of God on earth. In conclusion, ethics, far from creating and shaping politics, falls to be a mere branch thereof. Gentile claims to have suppressed the old transcendent Absolute, the very superhuman character of which, however, was a guarantee of freedom, for it left an opening for discrimination between the will and mind of God and that of even His most exalted human interpreters. What Gentile has really done is to install in His place the far more fallible, more intolerant, less venerable, more sinister and unspiritual domination of the Nationalist State or, under this name, of any faction or mob which by fair means or foul succeeds temporarily in seizing the helm. The philosophy of Spirit as pure act, with no presuppositions and distinctions

within or without, quite consistently carries him to the point of introducing the worship of the last act of History in the place of the worship of the Eternal, and blinds him to the difference between persuasive speech and coercive cudgel. The fact is that Gentile, while he follows on the steps of Hegel and of Hegel's Italian interpreter, Bertrando Spaventa, in exalting History and the State as the Absolute's highest self-revelation on earth, differs both from Hegel and Spaventa in showing himself sadly lacking in the historical spirit. Hegel's State, which shapes from above and without a civic society, though not the political self-expression and self-organisation of such a society, but the creation of a political minority having interests of its own and imposing itself and its State on a conquered people, yet was a great progress over the pre-existing political conditions of Germany. It was an advance on the remnants of feudalism and a check to conflicting particularist, individual and corporate, economic forces. And similarly Spaventa's State, conceived on the Hegelian pattern, was a great progress, since Italian unity also had been the achievement of a wilful and conscious minority imposing it from above and without on an indifferent and reluctant majority. But such, surely, is not the nature of the British or the French or the Swiss State, and it is very doubtful whether, or for how long, it will be that of the Italian State, in a world where industrialism has engendered the

necessity of popular initiative, of voluntary organisations, of professional concerted action, etc.

Fascism, which is a combination of self-intoxicated Nationalism and of self-asserting syndicalism, is only Actual Idealism transferred to politics. Just as Actual Idealism is the celebration, so to speak, of the divinity of the present instant of thinking activity as creator of the very past from which it seems to proceed and by which it seems at first sight to be determined; just as Actual Idealism is the celebration of Truth as consisting not in any relation between my present thinking and any past or external reality, but in the mere fact that I am by such thinking achieving a new realisation of myself: so Fascism is just activity for activity's sake, the negation of any standard of truth beyond the capacity of being and doing all that one succeeds in being and doing at any moment. It is the apotheosis of immediacy, of passing impulse, of uncriticised and uncriticisable self-assertion considered as synonymous with unlimited freedom. *Sic volo, sic jubes, stat pro ratione voluntas.* Logically the Nemesis of such a Philosophy is scepticism; but, while, from the equal unreliability of all opinions, ancient scepticism draws the conclusion that we must give up every claim to judge and to act, modern scepticism or relativism, from the premise that all theories are practical fictions, draws the conclusion that, on the contrary, everybody is right in claiming truth

for his ideas and in imposing it upon others with all means at his disposal. Whence this difference?

This question brings us to a final appreciation of Italian Neo-Idealism, and especially of Actual Idealism, and of the causes of their comparative success and failure, especially in Italy. The causes relating to Croce and Gentile as pioneers of the revival of Italian philosophical learning since the beginning of the present century have already been mentioned in the first chapter. Other causes are of a more historical and political character. The specifically immanentistic and anti-religious bias of this philosophy in particular has its roots deep in the struggles between cultured minds and ecclesiastical authority in Southern Italy since the later Renaissance and the Counter-Reformation, and also in the jurisdictional struggles between the Kings of Naples and the Roman Curia. And this spirit was strengthened in reaction to the anti-national attitude of the Curia during the period of the formation of modern Italy, especially after the failure of the Neo-Guelph wing of Italian patriotism in 1848. During the whole of this period, whether in the form of direct assimilation of Kantian and Hegelian idealism (especially Hegelianism of the Right) or of indirect influences culminating in the systems of Antonio Rosmini and Vincenzo Gioberti, the new philosophy seemed capable of bringing about a synthesis of Christianity

in its essentials and the modern spirit of cultural, religious and national liberty. Since 1848 the increased sharpness of conflict between the national movement and the Curia Romana on the questions of ecclesiastical property and of the Temporal Power of the Pope, resulted, on the one hand, as elsewhere in Europe, in a favourable ground being created for the spread of a purely materialistic and naturalistic philosophy; and, on the other hand, in bringing about, in Italy also, as already in Germany with Strauss and Feuerbach, a kind of Neo-Hegelianism of the Left, mainly represented by Bertrando Spaventa. Spaventa's driving inspiration was the need of providing a philosophy capable of overcoming naturalism and of vindicating the reality and sovereignty of spiritual values, while laying resolutely the axe at the root of every philosophy of transcendence and, consequently, of any spiritual power independent of and above the State. In Spaventa's work we find already the main motives of Gentile's world-intuition, the idea of Man as the self-consciousness of the World, the idea of history as the progressive self-realisation and self-revelation of the human mind, and that of the State as the highest organic embodiment of Mind on earth, taking upon itself even the functions of the Church. Spaventa resolutely and boldly conceives it as the mission of the newly-born secular Italian State to realise historically the Hegelian resolution of Religion

into Philosophy and the identity of Church and State, of Man and God.

Meanwhile Naturalism was bringing about its own dissolution. The rise of evolutionary biology was in itself fatal to the early hope of a full explanation of everything in mechanical terms, an explanation which was being gravely undermined also by the new science of Energetics and the second law of thermodynamics. Moreover, evolutionary biology seemed to suggest that knowledge itself might be explained as an instrument of self-preservation of animal beings, developed and sharpened by the necessities of the struggle for existence and of adaptation to external conditions; and that even science might be not a mirror of external realities and events, but a practical instrument of defence and conquest against the surrounding unknown universe; a system of useful fictions, whose degree of utility is the only basis of what we mean by truth. Truth is resolved into useful illusion or myth, engendered by the universal and inexhaustible will-to-live: matter is resolved into energy, and energy in its turn tends to be conceived in its inner nature on the pattern of the only cause of movement we directly know: our own will. Thus does the crisis of naturalism carry us to the origins of pragmatism, behaviourism, contingentism, Bergsonian intuitionism and other more or less conscious forms of subjectivism. The tables are turned. Far from Nature being called upon to explain

Mind, it is Mind that seems more likely to explain Nature; whether because it is from volitions that we may through habit derive many apparently fixed rigidities of Nature; or whether because Nature appears to be the abstraction of socially useful superindividual contents of experience; or whether because Mind is the only reality of which we are directly aware.

And how do we directly know it except in our own human experience? Therefore, as soon as Naturalism dissolved under the pressure of self-criticism, the Neo-Hegelianism of Spaventa's successors, of Croce and Gentile, was left in possession of the field, free to stand out as the only true and *absolute Positivism*, as the World's self-consciousness in Man, as the resolution of the divine into the human and of the Church into the State; or at least free to stand out as the banner of a world-historical revolution, the necessity of which was first felt in Italy, and the actualisation of which is the specific mission of the Italian State. This is the second and main cause of the comparative success and significance of Italian Neo-Idealism: it seems to assign to Italy a new historical mission. The third cause is to be sought in a wider process of which that of the making of modern Italy is a part. For the ancient world and for the Middle ages Man stood before the independent reality of Nature as a powerless being who could only passively know and obey. Since the Renaissance Nature has increasingly

become something like a tool or a weapon in the hands of Man, who has become ever more conscious of a kind of intrinsic divinity. The myths of the Golden Age, of the Fall, of the Envy of the Gods, as key to the greatness and decay of empires, have increasingly yielded to the myth of indefinite progress through science and industry, of History as progress in a single irreversible direction, of indefinite accumulation of experience and endless approximation to a final state of universal happiness and perfection. Even when during the nineteenth century, and especially at the beginning of the twentieth century, it began to be felt as absurd that in a universe where everything is either in evolution or in dissolution there should be a state of final perfection for Man; even while, about the same time, the Myth of Science as faithful transcription of objective Nature was already practically exploded, man went on believing in historical progress, *i.e.* in the idea that the event is to be the standard of evaluation of the forces which engendered it; that it is all they could give us, the best under the circumstances; and that the stream of the past was the only safe guide to the direction of the future. History was deified as the successor of God and as the true judgment of God. Even though there be no longer room for any final state of happiness and perfection in this or in any other world, nay, just because of this, men went on thinking that History is a process every

moment of which preserves and overcomes its predecessor, a process in which nothing is lost, a process with ever more frequent and intense pulsations and ever speedier rhythm, a process with neither beginning nor end, a process which is an end in itself; whose subject and hero is Man increasingly bent upon self-realisation, on creation for creation's sake and whose secret mainspring is the Will-to-Power characteristic of modern industrial civilisation. Gentile's and Croce's theory of History is the dressing-up in dialectical fashion of this modern state of mind. The two Italian philosophers owe not a little of their fortune to having perceived that the philosophical task of our day was the formulation of a philosophical theory of History, since mind appears to be the only reality and its nature is essentially historical. Their notion of History may be too abstract and may require further determinations; their very notion of Becoming as synthesis of Being and Not-Being may require correction and resolution into that of Becoming as synthesis of Actuality and Potentiality; but they have at least tried to answer a real need and raised problems which will haunt our minds for a long time to come.

A fourth cause, which, however, concerns more Gentile than Croce and brings to light the germs of inner dissolution in this philosophy, is to be sought in the fact that Gentile's system, not in its general structure, but in the part concerning Religion and Politics, received, we might say, its

last touch from the hand of the war and of post-war events. Italy entered the Great War and fought it with a divided soul. It achieved, almost on the very morrow of a collapse that was nearly fatal, such a victory as was not known on any other front, a victory such as her statesmen, at the beginning, neither dared to expect nor perhaps even to desire, and such as to most Italians seemed incredible till it actually came. This victory was followed by great social agitations which to many seemed in danger of destroying at once the victory and the State. The emotions consequent upon these events should go a long way towards explaining the feeling of national self-intoxication and self-assertion and the tendency towards State idolatry and even apotheosis of force which find, at times, such rhetorical and exuberant expression in Gentile's more recent works. The war and post-war necessities seemed, then, to support the emphasis laid on unity, on the reality of the common will as identical with the Universal, with the single Transcendental Subject as historically realised pre-eminently in the State and practically, in the ruler, individual, or party. But the war also emphasised the already-mentioned fundamental difficulty of this philosophy, the simultaneous existence of a plurality of finite subjects, of independent thinking acts, of independent national lives in alliance or in conflict. This difficulty might be given the form of a dilemma. If there is a single

Subject, and this Subject, as *Act*, is at every moment all that it can be in whatever of its expressions, how can there be Progress, Development, History, since these presuppose a Subject which is not at once all that it can be but is, on the contrary, in process of becoming all that it really is? And if there are differences in the degree in which Spirit realises itself in its expressions, how can the Act of the Spirit be one? Furthermore, if the Act is thus broken up into infinite independent centres of action, will not each of these be shut up within itself, will not each of their standpoints thereby appear absolute to its holder and be incommensurable with any other and therefore equivalent to them all? Are we not thus landed in a kind of mystic intuitionism, not very different from that of Bergson, whose "intuition" shares with Gentile's thinking act the immediate certainty of its own truth, a certainty which it loses the moment it is made the object of a further act of thought taking its place and subject to the same destiny, and so on *ad infinitum?* And, if such be the case, what of the idea of History as infinite progress along a single line? What of the conservation of values in a world where each line of development may at any moment interrupt many others and be interrupted? Modern idealism, therefore, may rightly claim that the Myth of objective "History," not less than its predecessor, the Myth of objective "Nature," has been exploded, and that both History and Nature,

far from determining us from behind and from without, are only tools of Action, or, to use another metaphor, are shadows which Action in its absolute freedom of self-realisation projects all round and by which, forgetful that they are of its own making, it fancies itself bound. This is in a way true, though, as we know, far from the whole truth. But Actual Idealism, the logical outcome of all modern idealisms, destroys at the same time, on these very premises, the possibility not only of Historical Progress, but also of a common universe and of a common truth. Truth ceases to be a freely recognised and accepted Truth, even a self-engendered and self-imposed Truth, and becomes a Myth and a Faith which some believe in and try to impose on others whether by sermon or by cudgel; and the universe is turned from a rational order or Cosmos into the City of Pandemonium, where every demon thinks himself not *a* god, but God. Ancient Scepticism opened the way to the quietism of ecstasis with its flights from the alone to the Alone. Modern Activism, not less sceptical in its logical results, wears itself out, like modern civilisation, of which it is the theoretical form, in spasmodic fits of a peculiar kind of mystical self-intoxication, the self-intoxication of industrial and national power. And in the long run absolute activity will carry us no further than absolute rest.

This step from absolute relativity to scepticism, and even more and more to pessimistic scepticism,

has actually been lived through and is being systematically formulated and defended by Prof. Giuseppe Rensi. In the sphere of pure reason, he claims, there is no proposition which cannot be maintained and refuted with equally good and opposite arguments. It is only in regard to sensible phenomena that universal agreement is possible. As soon as we pass from facts experimentally ascertained to their interpretation we pass from science to mere opinion, imagination, Art. In so far as we consider the mere expression of impressions we have Art. As to knowledge we can only take notice of different opinions, *i.e.* be sceptical. Whether in Art, Economics, Ethics, or Politics, the ultimate authority is never any universally ascertainable inner necessity, but always the external fact of the will, convenience, opinion, taste, or necessity of the social group or the race.

Literature.

Main works of Professor Gentile referred to in this chapter:

La Riforma della dialettica hegeliana. Messina, 1923. Contains many essays written before the more recent systematic exposition of the author's philosophy; essential to understand its development. See especially *Il pensiero come atto puro.*

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CHAPTER V

FROM IDEALISM TO SPIRITUAL REALISM

Summary.—Critical Idealism and the synthesis of Filippo Masci—Francesco de Sarlo's psychological realism—Giovanni Aliotta's pluralistic spiritual realism—The transcendent religious idealism of Piero Martinetti—The synthesis of idealism and realism of Bernardino Varisco—The Neo-Scholastics and Mgr. Sturzo's revision of the Scholastic theory of knowledge—Neo-Mysticism—Christianity and History—Religion and History.

Neo-Hegelianism, however, in spite of the vigour and brilliancy and undoubted originality of its leading representatives, has never lacked strenuous opponents, even in the days of its triumph. Against the claim that the *a priori* forms of experience are themselves creative of the content or matter of experience as well as against the claim that they are engendered by this very content, from sensation up to highest thought without any legislative activity by the subject, we find ever watchful the old brave band of the neo-criticists, insistent upon the idea that experience is at the same time irreducible to thought and not independent of it, so that absolute idealism and positivistic empiricism are equally illegitimate developments. Such is the leading motive of the works of Alessandro Chiappelli (born in 1857), of Guido Villa (1867), of Giovanni

Vidari (1871), and especially of Filippo Masci (1844–1922), the most critically subtle Italian philosophical mind since 1870, whose final and most comprehensive work is *Pensiero e conoscenza* (1922), the masterpiece of this School.

If experience is not independent of thought and yet not reducible to it, Philosophy cannot be either the science of thought alone or the synthesis of purely scientific knowledge, but will have to be scientific knowledge passed through the criticism of thought and seen in relation to thought. And reality thus reached will not be a reality ruled by purely causal relations; it will be characterised also by logical and final relations. It will be a reality of which mind will be the inner and subjective aspect and nature the outer and objective aspect; both aspects inseparable each of the other, and capable of indefinite evolution and involution from bottom to top; and the inner subjective aspect being the more basic of the two. But while Philosophy in its synthetic endeavour is confined to passing to and fro from experience to idea and back from idea to experience, Religion is faith in the possibility or reality of something deeper than purely finite experience, something containing the *raison d'être* of present experience and capable of revealing reality as in its essence spiritual, guaranteeing the unity of finite with universal life. Philosophy is rational criticism; Religion is experience turning for unity and completion to intuition, and thus providing

Philosophy itself with new matter to reflect upon. Thus almost insensibly neo-criticism shades off into critical idealism just as critical idealism almost insensibly shades off, for instance, into the psychological realism of Francesco de Sarlo (born 1864) and Antonio Aliotta (born 1881) on the one hand and Piero Martinetti and Bernardino Varisco on the other, through their common interest in vindicating at the same time the objective validity of science and the reality of values.

Francesco de Sarlo, who came to Philosophy from medicine and neuropathology, began his career as a philosopher with a series of works on the fundamental ideas of physical and biological science, culminating in a study on *Evolution*, showing Evolution, in its naturalistic and even more in its idealistic conception, to be not so much the solution of a problem as, rather, itself a problem, the purely descriptive formula of a process to be interpreted.

Through a successive criticism of the notions of cause and substance, showing that without the notion of substance (*i.e.* of a being which exists by and for itself, on the type of the self-conscious Ego) and without the notion of cause (*i.e.* of an initiative activity of the type of volition) no scientific system of things is conceivable, De Sarlo reached a world-view much along the lines of traditional theism. De Sarlo is a realist in the sense that he thinks that since experience is a sum or complex of activities, and activity, even thinking activity, is always a

temporal process, we could never know purely logical relations, whose truth is not in time, if objects were immanent in and identical with the psychological temporal processes by which we know them. Owing to the impossibility of considering sense-qualities as mere creations of the subject and the equal impossibility of considering them as things in themselves unrelated to the subject, thought is driven to consider them as phenomena, signs, appearances of a reality which it affirms and ideally reconstructs for itself through a progressive discrimination between its own inner necessities and hypothetical guesses and the judgments imposed even more than suggested by objective situations. It is this possibility of disagreements between rational principles and actual functionings of mind, as resulting in logical, ethical and æsthetical error, together with the impossibility of resolving the subject into the process of its acts from which he consciously differentiates himself, that prevents us from considering the many subjects which have a duration in time, a development and a mutual imperviousness of their own, as mere determinations and self-differentiations of a single (a transcendental) subject.

It is, furthermore, on this distinction between factual and rational necessity that de Sarlo rears his ethical and metaphysical ideas. Ethical science is possible because, besides specific forms of artistic, logical, religious experience, there is a

specific form of moral experience with axioms, or principles, of immediate evidence of its own.

Hence morality's autonomy, its independence of philosophical and metaphysical views, although morality itself is one of the main and most solid pillars of any theory of ultimate reality.[1]

Antonio Aliotta (born in Palermo, 1881), a former disciple of De Sarlo, is now the best known and brilliant representative of this same School. His main work, *The Idealistic Reaction against Science* (1912), has been translated into English; and it is no exaggeration to say that no work has been more successful in maintaining the validity of the scientific concept against French contingentism (Boutroux) and intuitionism (Bergson), against American pragmatism (James) and German, English and American idealism. For Aliotta the scientific concept is not a purely *man-made formula* having only a descriptive, practical, economic value, and, consequently, conveying to us an impoverished view of reality, which in its rich concreteness would be given to us by intuition alone. The concept is a synthesis of concrete experiences, through which each intuition is set in a larger context of relations and through which, therefore, the fragmentariness of a purely intuitional experience, inevitably conditioned by our sense-limitations, is corrected and transcended.

[1] De Sarlo: *Metaphysics, Science and Morality*, Rome, 1898; *Studies in Contemporary Philosophy* (*ibid.*, 1901); *Modern Thought*, Palermo, 1915.

The essence of the concept is not the conventional element indispensable to its communicability, but this very ability to transcend the passing instant of intuitional experience. Its communicability, far from being a result of impoverishing human abstraction, rests on its characteristic power to grasp the common and permanent character of objects in contrast with or among all the other features given by intuition; a characteristic which the scientific concept shares with the historical and philosophical concept and which, therefore, invalidates, as we have seen, Croce's distinction between concepts properly so called and pseudo-concepts or purely intellectual fictions. The world-view authorised by this vindication of the scientific concept is, however, neither naturalistic nor idealistic. It is not naturalistic, since naturalism is made possible only by forgetting that so-called Nature exists only in relation to the subject of experience and that spiritual activity is essential to our knowledge of all reality. It is not idealistic, since Nature is irreducible to mere thinking acts of the subject and resists all attempts to deprive it of its stubborn independence.

Experience is always an act with two distinct but indissoluble poles: the subject and the object. I cannot think of myself without at the same time affirming the reality of other realities beyond my own and in contrast with my own. Therefore we cannot think either of a subject not in relation

with some object, nor of an object not being experienced by some subject. We can only think of the universe as a plurality of subjects in mutual action and interaction in different stages of psychological evolution, a plurality, each member of which is capable of appearing as object to other subjects, and of evolving from the dimmest to the highest forms of experience and of falling back again from these to the earliest ones everlastingly.

When these subjects are at the level of chaotically interacting spontaneity in its most elementary forms, each of them following the line of the greatest pleasure and the least pain, their reality appears to us as mere inert and passive matter. Thus, in consequence of innumerable experiments spread over æons and millenniums of psychological and social trials, here and there multitudes of subjects learn to act as members one of another and as units of organic wholes as against other similar wholes, we see emerging forms of life, society and civilisation. Art, Science, Religion, Philosophy are just the highest aspects of this universal and eternal progress of experience towards vaster and richer forms of mutual interpenetration and unity on the part of these intrinsically indestructible centres and more or less durable systems of centres. There is, therefore, no absolute truth either in Science, Morality, Religion or Philosophy. A theory is true to the extent in which the acts it suggests help to realise higher harmonies between

our human energies and the numberless energies of the world. There are levels and degrees of reality and truth, the higher including the lower and resting thereon; but Truth is only the ever-receding and yet ever-impelling final goal of life in each of its myriad forms.

Such is the radical or Absolute Experimentalism of Aliotta, grounded upon a pluralistic view of the stuff of Experience.

In its earlier stage this radical pluralism was crowned by a theistic conclusion; but the World-War seems to have shaken Aliotta's faith in Theism, as more compatible than other philosophies with the reality of pain and evil. Hence, for Aliotta, Religion remains no longer as the experience of a living Unity at once immanent and transcendent, whose rational justification is the fact that without such a living Unity Philosophy is unable to achieve a rational synthesis of experience as a whole. Religion remains for him as the immediate experience each soul possesses of its essential unity with the whole of Being, as the longing after ever more intimate forms of such Unity; a longing and an effort which is creative of these more intimate forms. No purely conceptual synthesis will ever be felt adequate to the concreteness of life; hence philosophy will always stimulate in us the desire of new and higher immediacies, which mystical genius will be always engaged in providing. But mystical immediacy in its own turn will never be

adequate to the richness of life, and thus a new dissatisfaction will always provoke new attempts to reflect on such immediacies and to build on them new philosophies, *ad infinitum*.

All this may be true, and yet we cannot help raising the question, whether Aliotta has not allowed his philosophical balance to be unduly upset by the Great War. Has the Great War in any way added to the awfulness of the problem of pain and evil, an awfulness not unknown to the greatest theistic thinkers, who, certainly, not only have not shirked it, but have been among the greatest agencies in bringing it to the fore ?

Moreover, Aliotta's pluralism, even more than Croce's and Gentile's monism, so valiantly demolished by him, fails to do justice to the principle of the conservation of values.

Croce's and Gentile's monism breaks down in the endeavour to show that the reality of many simultaneous and conflicting historical developments is only apparent and that, in fact, progress along a single line is the law. In Aliotta's pluralism the plurality of individual and historical developments is admitted; but no attempt is made to show, for instance, that the development of humanity on our planet may not be fatally interfered with by other historical developments acting upon us as uncontrollable cosmic agencies. In other words, no guarantee is offered that purely causal agencies may not prevail over historical and teleological processes.

In dealing with this central problem of philosophy the names of *Piero Martinetti* and *Bernardino Varisco* stand out, especially the latter, as the two greatest systematic thinkers intent upon the synthesis of the respective degrees of the truth of realism and idealism and of the principles of immanence and transcendence. Both share with Aliotta the rejection of Realism in the sense that it is self-contradictory to speak of a reality which is not a subject or an object for a subject; both share with him the notion of the universe as made up of interacting subjects in different stages of evolution; but they differ from him by their attempts to achieve a systematic view of such a universe, (*i.e.* to see in their right relation the One and the Many,) not less than by their resolute transition from a purely immanentist to a transcendentist philosophy.

For Martinetti, who has not a few points in common with Schuppe, with Schubert-Soldern and with Bradley, experience is essentially a process of progressive synthesis, by which the multiplicity of sense-data is more and more reduced to unity, but in which this unity is not something added from without to such a multiplicity, but the becoming explicit of what is the deeper truth and the inner necessity of multiplicity itself. The unity towards which experience progresses is the truth of the given multiplicity from which it starts, a truth which the unities or wholes of the sense-world and of the logical world only inadequately reveal, but which is their

foundation and their completion; a unity which is the one real substance, the one true eternal law, prior to every mind, the goal of all minds, present in some degree to each and yet transcending all.

The freedom and blessedness of the human spirit is greatest where communion with this unity is at its best; and this communion is Religion, the highest form of experience in its dissatisfaction with scattered multiplicity, fragmentariness, and transitoriness, a form characterised by the intensest longing after perfection and by trust in the transcendent reality of what, apart from Religion, would be only the Ideal, and through Religion becomes the rest, the peace, the home of the Spirit and its perfection. Now this ideal unity, felt as the Supremely Real, cannot, owing to its transcendental nature, find expression but through symbols, which are true in so far as they help to realise their own inadequacy and, through this, the imperfection of our present life and the imperative necessity of rising above it. These symbols themselves, however, become obstacles to such a realisation as their freshness fades. Hence the perennial need of a criticism of myths and dogmas, so that not only they may not become ends in themselves, but through their continuous renewal the Divine may be sought after and found in ever purer forms. This perennial criticism constitutes the Religious function of Philosophy thus ever arising from the very heart of religious experience and preparing Man to purer

intuitions of superhuman reality. Hence, also, Martinetti's opinion that Immanentist Idealism is only a form of transition from Naturalism towards religious and transcendent Idealism.

It would seem unfair and premature to attempt a criticism of a system of which as yet we possess only the critical introduction, a truly wonderful masterpiece of historical and critical learning and the systematic outcome of which is eagerly awaited by all philosophical students.

But there is one point in respect of which Martinetti shows himself so far still enslaved to abstraction and formalism in comparison with Aliotta and Varisco. Are not his ideal and formal Unity (a mere form without content), and his *a priori* conceived multiplicity intrinsically contradictory? Are they not, therefore, juxtaposed, rather than organically related?

We must, therefore, turn to Varisco as, so far, of the two thinkers the only one who has given us a system worthy of being contrasted with those of Croce and Gentile, not merely in its conclusions but also in systematic comprehensiveness and coherence.

Varisco, who is a mathematician acquainted with all the most recent developments of mathematics and energetics, was once a Positivist, but already in the most remarkable of his earlier works he shows himself aware of the importance of the dilemma,

which is the starting-point of his most recent speculation.

We cannot help asking ourselves, he says, what is the good or the end of life, and two solutions are offered to us. One is the Christian solution, according to which our present life and its values are part of a wider order to which, therefore, our present values must be subordinated. The other claims that the present order is the only real one and that our duty is just our aspiration towards the best we can conceive of. One of these two solutions must be true and the other must be false. We must choose between the two, but, as merely practical common sense or particular sciences, being only fragmentary aspects of reality cannot give us the knowledge of reality as a whole, we must turn to philosophy; *i.e.* to a knowledge of reality grounded upon the implications of knowledge as such. But reality includes also the moral life; consequently, just as we cannot determine our duty, our end in practical life, apart from our knowledge of reality, so also we cannot determine our knowledge of reality as a whole apart from our knowledge of our human duties and ends. Philosophy, therefore, requires of us purity of heart and thorough devotion to truth. Its solution of the greatest problems will depend on the degree of our direct acquaintance with what is good.

Let us now come to the implications of knowledge. What is the condition of my knowing anything at

all? Obviously there is no problem when I am merely knowing myself. In the case of my awareness of myself my knowing and my being are just one reality. And it is just because this perfect coincidence between knowing and being makes the Ego perfectly transparent to itself that the Ego has been taken as the type of all substances. The problem arises only in the case of my knowledge of so-called external things, other than myself. But here also, surely, to know anything means that I am in a certain relation to it; even the mere possibility of a relation is itself a relation which means in its own turn that such a thing and its relation to me are parts of myself. To say that I can really know only myself should not, therefore, mean that I am shut up in myself, but that there is no reason for thinking of realities which are not implicitly part of myself; in short, that my knowledge is co-extensive with the universe. And this moreover should not mean that I am the universe or the only centre of it, for my knowledge of the world is acquired in the course of a process of self-development in which my activities meet with the resistances of other activities which cannot legitimately be interpreted except as the activities of other subjects like myself in different stages of evolution from a minimum to a maximum of consciousness and capable of mutual interaction. Each subject's reality is just his activity, which in the most evolved subjects is clearly self-conscious activity, in relation to all

other subjects. All subjects, at least subconsciously, in however dim a degree and manner, meet in a form of mutual experience of which the clear consciousness of many of them is only a partial explicitness. In other words, all subjects imply one another, and their multiplicity constitutes the universe as a system of which each is a centre and every centre of which differs from all others only in the amount of clear consciousness and its content. Now, if the only relations holding in the universe were logical ones, there could be no temporal happenings; but since, as a matter of fact, temporal happenings exist, we can only explain them as due not to logical relations, but to the interactions between subjects; and since such interactions to be possible at all presuppose a unity within which to take place, such unity will have to be not a pure and simple one, but the unity of a system. How shall we conceive such a unity? This is the point where Varisco takes us further than either Aliotta or Martinetti. The unity of the universe is given in that all things and all subjects have in common the character of Being. I cannot know either myself or any table, horse, cup or saucer without knowing myself or these things as *real*, as sharing in Being, which is thus at the same time my concept of Being and the one quality common to myself and all things; the concept and the quality being numerically identical. Just as the sense-qualities of objects become known to me through their being enclosed in my consciousness,

without thereby becoming exclusively mine (such as, on the contrary, my volitions, feelings and acts of seeing, smelling, hearing, etc. are), so all their other qualities and therefore also their common feature of Being may be enclosed in my clear consciousness and become numerically identical with my notion of Being, without thereby becoming exclusively mine; so that in knowing myself I know myself and what is other than myself as being both *real*. And since this happens in the case of every subject, Being exists in and for all subjects not as the act of thinking, which is private to each of them, but as what they all can think or do think in knowing anything: it exists at once as the most common of qualities and as the most general of predicates, *i.e.* as the perfect coincidence of reality and knowledge.

Now Being, on the one hand, must be; it cannot but persist in existing. The thought of Being as no longer being is a self-contradictory thought, and on the other hand Being exists only as the common feature of all other realities, *i.e.* of its determinations, just as the triangle exists only in its determinations, the isosceles, scalene and equilateral triangles. Therefore it is necessary that there should be determinations of Being in order that Being may *be*; without these determinations there could be nothing; which means that their existence follows out of the necessity that Being, which *cannot not be*, should realise itself by emerging from its indeterminate and purely logical existence and

by determining itself so-and-so as the system of the universe. And as in the universe we find temporal happenings which cannot be reduced to purely logical extra-temporal relations and which can only be due to the spontaneities of the many determinations of Being, even these happenings and their causal relations, although not merely logical, must be rooted in the logical extra-temporal necessity owing to which Being, in order to go on existing, must ever go out of its indeterminateness into the multiplicity of its determinations or centres of spontaneity. If the determinations of Being which constitute the phenomenal world are really essential to it, if Being exists only as the common feature of all its determinations, then we have Pantheism; and the series of temporal happenings and changes is merely instrumental to the logical process by which Being cannot help maintaining itself in existence; and each subject or world of subjects in striving towards self-realisation is merely serving a purposeless process engendered by a purely logical necessity; a process which makes nought of all human labours and values. Every subject has value as an element of the whole, but the whole itself is worthless and finality and spontaneity are swallowed up in eternal and aimless logical necessity. The universe is eternally changing only in order to remain eternally the same, however much the distribution of its determinations may vary at any moment. If, on the other hand, we deny that the determinations of the world as given

in experience are essential to Being, then we are driven to Theism. If the reality of Being is not exhausted in its being thought by single subjects which are its determinations, if Being does not necessarily achieve its self-consciousness only *through* and *as* the self-consciousness of each subject, then Being must exist as a self-consciousness of its own, distinct from finite self-consciousnesses; and the latter cannot be due to a purely logical necessity. They must have been created by such a Universal Subject *ab æterno* realising in Himself the fullness of Being and acting with a spontaneity instinct with value, in view of an end, whose triumph in the universe He can guarantee. In other words Being, in such a case, appears as God and Providence. In the former Pantheistic hypothesis, there is no room in the world for real spontaneous activity; even the spontaneities of the subjects are due to logical necessity; in the theistic hypothesis alone is there real original activity in Being as well as in beings. Once we have disposed, by means of an adequate theory of knowledge, of naturalism, agnosticism, and monistic idealism, we cannot but recognise that this necessity of choosing between Pantheism and Theism is the greatest problem of philosophy. It is at bottom a problem of values. Is it an essential of values, and especially of moral values, to be permanent? Obviously, if values are not permanent, if man cannot rely on an order capable of preserving and ensuring the results of

his efforts towards goodness, goodness will, from a rational standpoint, resolve itself into ability to be equal to any situation; capacity and fortitude will have the last word. If, however, values are permanent, capacity and fortitude, though not losing their value, will be subordinate to goodness in the ultimate sense of love and charity. Our choice between the two possible notions of what is morally good will almost inevitably depend on our own moral experience and worth. In his two main works, *Imassimi Problemi* and *Conosci te stesso* Varisco frankly avowed his personal faith in the permanence of values and in the theistic hypothesis, but from a purely philosophical standpoint left the issue open and declared the problem not yet adequately thought out. But in some of his latest articles and in *Dall' nomo a Dio*, now in the press, he resolutely affirms the existence of a Universal Subject transcending all single subjects and yet partly immanent in each and all, just as each subject is partly transcendent and partly immanent in all others. In a letter written to the author of these lines Varisco summarises some of the considerations that have prompted him to choose the theistic alternative. (1) While reality as a whole must be absolutely transparent to the Spirit, as being due to Spirit, it is certainly not so transparent to each single subject. (2) The single subject is capable of error; *actual idealism* is unable to account for error, and error cannot without absurdity be admitted in Spirit.

(3) The single subject is inevitably, to a great extent, subconscious, *i.e.* cannot at any moment embrace in his zone of clear consciousness all he knows; and his spiritual unity with other subjects is not sufficient to eliminate such subconsciousness, a subconsciousness incompatible with the fact and principle that thinking can only be conscious thinking. Consequently Spirit is not the only thinker and does not exist as merely immanent in single subjects, and therefore possesses determinations of its own, *i.e.* is independently self-conscious. While absolute transcendence is absurd, since we cannot predicate anything of the Transcendent without making it immanent within us by means of a character we possess in common with it, we cannot deny a relative transcendence of Being or of anything in particular without denying the progressive character of knowledge. Nor does it avail anything to say that the Universal Subject realises Himself *in* and *as* the totality of individuals, each of which therefore is the Universal Subject in one of his determinations and has nothing transcending himself: so that the same thinking subject in thinking of himself *sub specie æternitatis* is God; and in thinking of himself *sub specie temporis*, is individual man. For, first of all, though individual subjects in their relations to one another no doubt do imply one another and in part overlap and even converge, their unification and communion are never complete, never a unity, like that of a single subject, the only concrete

living unity we know. So that a totality which is not for a subject or is not itself a subject cannot be a unity, and a unity which is not a subject is either an object or a meaningless thing-in-itself, an x of no use for any purpose. Secondly, every human thinking is temporal, develops itself in time; it is only through abstraction that we rise to the grasp of the extra-temporal, the eternal and God. Even according to Gentile himself Spirit realises itself in the totality of the individuals and in each individual; therefore in the world and in time. Consequently there is a relative transcendence which is the very condition of the progressive realisation of the divine thought; otherwise becoming and progress are meaningless words.

Such, in its essential logical development and structure, is Varisco's systematic view of the world and of human life, solidly built on the carefully sifted speculation of all the ages and on the most recent critical thought both of Europe and of America; and, above all, inclusive of the degrees of truth of the very systems he criticises most keenly: a rare example of Socratic thinking and of *philosophia perennis* in a moment when impatient syntheses and dialectical flights and smart flatteries of brilliant "modernities" are so fashionable.

We cannot, however, close our survey of contemporary Italian philosophy without mentioning the remarkable Neo-Thomist revival, connected with

the foundation of the splendidly edited *Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica* and of the *Universita Cattolica del Sacro Cuore* in Milan, under whose auspices excellent monographs of experimental psychology and of philosophical criticism of modern tendencies have already appeared.

By far the best documents of this Neo-Thomist revival, but quite unconnected with the Milanese centre, are *Il problema della conoscenza* (Roma, 1925) and the forthcoming *Il problema dell' Etica* of Mgr. Mario Sturzo, remarkable not only for the conclusive criticism of Neo-Hegelianism, but also and above all for the bold revision of the theory of knowledge of the more orthodox wing of old and new Thomism.

We know that for Aristotle and the Schoolmen a thing was analysed into *accidents* or qualities or events, which do not exist on their own account and require a subject or substance in which to inhere, and *substance*, that to which the accidents belong. A tree, for instance, was considered to have, as pure or absolute accidents, all its quantitative and qualitative characters ; as relative accidents its likenesses, activities, place, time, etc. We know also that for Aristotle and the Schoolmen sense-experience could only be experience of accidents, while the intellect alone could grasp the essences, the universal and permanent characters of things ; and this only through the subjective illumination of the essences, contained in sense-presentations (*phantasmata*), by that most mysterious non-cognitive faculty, the

intellectus agens. Only after such an illumination could the real cognitive intellect, the *intellectus possibilis*, form concepts and could knowledge arise by application of these to intuitions. Now, apart from the fact that it is impossible to see how a non-cognitive faculty could illuminate the said essences and how the perception of the essences could arise through a purely subjective illumination, we are faced with the difficulty that the essences, which are really neither different nor separate from concrete things, once they are severed, by such illumination, from their concrete material determinations, would cease to be real at all, and would become mere abstractions, mere thoughts of the subject, not objective predicates, not therefore the ground for objectively valid concepts. No knowledge of real objects can therefore arise by their application to sense-intuitions. The subject is completely shut up within himself. Thus neither the intellect nor the senses could give us the knowledge of particular concrete natures; and the problem of how the knowledge of particulars is possible is, on this basis, insoluble. Now, if the senses can give us only accidents and not particular natures or individuals, and if the intellect can give us only abstract universals, it is inevitable that sooner or later sensations appear as blind and concepts as empty as they did to Kant; and this knowledge could appear possible only as an *a priori synthesis* of what is blind coupled with what is empty and,

finally, as the creation of reality by the thinking process. Modern *a-priorism* and all forms of modern subjective idealism can be traced to the faulty Aristotelian and Scholastic epistemological doctrine. But let us firmly adhere to and develop the idea of the unity of man as spiritual subject—an idea already adumbrated in Aquinas's affirmation that it is not the senses that know, but man who knows through the senses. Let us free ourselves from the Aristotelian working hypothesis of sense and intellect as separate faculties operating by separate and parallel processes and from the Aristotelian dualism in man of *pure* sense-intuitions (as in animals) and of *pure* concepts; and let us on the contrary grasp the truth that in man, from the beginning, even sense-intuitions are never merely animal sense-intuitions but always spirit-permeated, thoroughly *human* sense-intuitions. Then we shall have done with any need of applying purely *a-priori* concepts to intuitions in order to gain knowledge. Throughout the scale of knowledge its basis will be perceptive presentation as a synthesis of intuition and concept, and it will mean by reflection on objects and their predicates thus at once something *intuited and thought*, so that by abstraction man will rise to knowledge of universals and to philosophy. All knowledge will thus be *a-posteriori* and the only *a-priori* needed will be the subject's capacity to know. Croce's and Gentile's idealism is only the last outcome, already and necessarily

pointing beyond itself, of the Aristotelian initial fallacy of forgetting the *human* element in sense-intuition, hereby conceiving knowledge as resulting from the application of purely human to purely sub-human elements of experience. Once this fallacy is detected and this dualism is overcome, once reality is *given* as always synthesis of intuition and concept, there is no further possibility of intuition appearing devoid of any theoretical value, nor of concepts appearing as additions to reality, nor of reality having to be deduced from and created by the thinking activity of the subject. It is impossible to doubt that Sturzo's revision of Scholastic epistemology is a most important forward step on the part of the most traditional current of modern philosophy, a successful attempt in vitally re-connecting what is permanently valid in Aquinas with the most characteristic developments of contemporary culture.

Nor is it only in philosophy, properly so called, that we catch undoubted symptoms of a deeper, more spiritual outlook in contemporary Italian life. We find in Guido Manacorda's *Mystica Minor*, soon to be followed by *Mystica Major*, one among many expressions of lay mysticism, in this case more and more adverse to any philosophical monism and more and more inspired by the spirit that moved Saint Theresa, St. John of the Cross, Ruysbroek. The result of modern monistic

Hegelianism, as we have seen and as Manacorda proclaims, can only be, sooner or later, scepticism first and pessimism after. "Sadness belongs to all; joy, true joy, full joy can only belong to the highest ones, the most replete with God." In this sense pessimism, the rending of Maya's veil, is already undoubtedly a step forward as against Hedonistic, sensistic, empiricist optimism, the mere hand-to-mouth, short-sighted optimism of Horace's *carpe diem*. But Man is thirsty after joy, after the living God: the highest sons of Man testify to the possibility of an optimism which is at once purification by means of pain and sorrow and purification *of* pain and sorrow, which thereby become essential elements of heroic bliss: the *Perfetta Letizia* of St. Francis, the Resurrection of body and soul after death, the Heaven which is Earth and more are some among such elements. In conformity with this full-orbed faith in transcendent reality and in the reality of our communion with it, Manacorda, in antithesis with Hegelian immanentism, with Lenin and Marx on the one hand and Gentile on the other, develops the concept of a State—the Heavenly City—which gradually realises itself on earth and progressively sets limits to the purely human State and culminates in spiritual sovereignty over it, as the Palladium of spiritual freedom against *the world*.

A not less symptomatic expression of the new spirit are the very successful *Profili* of St. Augustine,

St. Ambrose, and Aquinas, by Ernesto Bonaiuti, and his studies on Pauline mysticism and early Christianity. Bonaiuti is a priest, who is at the same time Professor of History of Christianity in the University of Rome; a priest whom the Vatican has not yet forgiven his earlier Modernist propensities, in spite of the fact that on the occasion of an almost fatal illness he was the subject of a religious experience which brought him back to orthodoxy and gave him the conviction that only a return to the unity of the church could save the modern world from catastrophe and the consciousness of being called to promote such a unity. Bonaiuti is an extremely suggestive writer and teacher, not devoid of mystical experience, and is genuinely convinced that mere politics and economics and mere culture cannot set boundaries to the centrifugal individualistic forces of modern civilisation let loose since the breakdown of the Mediæval Classico-Christian world, and that we need to move and are moving towards a new and higher religious synthesis of which Rome is to be the central inspiration and head. Not only this. Bonaiuti is convinced further that the modern so-called civilised world has reached a point which, if we do not strive after harmony and unity of differences, will lead us not only into a political and social but also into a moral disaster. The very possibility of a World-War, the very fact, however embryonic, of a League of Nations, proclaim that the age for comparatively independent cultures is

over, that we cannot help being one in misery if we do not train ourselves to be members one of another, and if economics and politics are not, in some way or another, put under the control of supernatural cultural and spiritual forces and standards. It is a sign of the times that thoughts such as these, which occur naturally to a student and reader of Dante and Mazzini, and more than naturally to any loving member of the Catholic Church, are not to-day rare either in England or in Germany, and occur even to positivistic minds, such as Guglielmo Ferrero, the well-known historian of the greatness and decline of ancient Rome, who thinks that the main problem of modern Europe is that of Authority, the very problem which tortured about a hundred years ago the brains of De Maistre, Saint Simon, Comte, Mazzini, Carlyle, and which they all, in different ways, thought insoluble except on a religious basis. But not less naturally do they set us doubting whether, on Bonaiuti's premises, the whole historical interval between the end of the Mediæval Unity and to-day was undiluted evil and the work of Satan, and whether notions of spiritual authority valid for the Middle Ages can be regarded as suitable for a world that has known the Renaissance and the Reformation.

An indirect contribution to the same outlook is Ugo Fracassini's closely-packed original studies on *The Roman Empire and Christianity* and *Greek Mysticism and Christianity* (1922), in which early

Christianity is studied not merely in its struggle against the Empire and in its triumph over it, but also and above all in its struggle with and triumph over the best elements of Greek mysticism, from which, however, it is shown, in the light of the best modern scholarship, to be essentially distinct. The actuality of these studies lies precisely in their being a very comprehensive and critical survey of the greatest and best-known struggle between a more or less impersonal, almost mechanical, essentially immanentist and pantheistic world-view, and a view according to which God is not merely loved, without knowing it, by the world, but loves it and loves every creature in it and gives His best for its redemption, and though above it, yet lives also within it. So that the success of Christianity, *i.e.* in concrete, of the Church, is a triumph at once over the Pagan religion of mysteries, however purified, and over Greek intellectual and ethical individualism with its claim that happiness and perfection are a purely individual affair and that the moral life, accessible to all, is sufficient to ensure both. It is a triumph which cannot be understood apart from an original mystical experience, socially shared and transmitted, of identity between the historical and the risen Christ, the Christ whose living Personality is the only key to the triumph itself. Far from the Church being merely the last survival of Hellenistic mysticism and of Roman political and legal tradition, it has arisen out of a selective synthesis

and a purifying adaptation of pre-existing tendencies by the spirit which it received from its Founder and transmitted through rites, symbols, and sacraments.

But, as a whole, it must be confessed that in both these authors, as well as in many minor ones, one misses the existence of a philosophic conception of History in its relation to Religion. Mere description of how something began, rose and became what it is, is no sufficient argument for its necessity in Religion as in other fields, and in Religion less than anywhere else will mere empiricism suffice. We must choose between a conception of History which resolves all History into a mere phenomenology of the Spirit or into the Spirit's self-revelation to Himself from everlasting to everlasting, in which case we are only transitory scenes of the eternal passing of the eternal present; and, on the other hand, a notion of History which does justice to the elements neglected by Absolute Idealism and Naturalism and wherein Religion is shown as not merely the Spirit's self-revelation through passing specimens of *Homo Sapiens*, but also the Spirit's self-revelation to men and His direct influence upon men. This is the central philosophical problem now in Italy as elsewhere: Absolute Idealism has given us its solution of the problem, which, we saw, is no solution at all; but it has compelled us all, increasingly since Hegel, to feel that this is the problem. We must accept its solution or find an alternative.

The problem might also be stated as follows:

Materialism and Naturalism in any of their forms have been shown to be untenable not merely because psychological phenomena appeared irreducible to biological ones, and these in their turn to mechanical ones, but also and mainly because, as Kant pointed out and we now realise more and more, the conception of a reality independent of thought and capable of explaining mind is a contradictory notion. Owing to the constitution of distinct physical, biological, and mental sciences working with independent and irreducible categories, we are irresistibly driven towards a synthesis of knowledge which, far from being reached by reducing all things to their minimum common denominator, can only be reached through their maximum common determinator, through a conception of reality inclusive of all its irreducible predicates, hence inclusive, above all, of Mind, since all sciences and even all empirical knowledge are realities as apprehended by Mind. And the attainment of this standpoint means the death of the fashionable myth of agnosticism, *i.e.* of the existence of realities we cannot know and of problems we cannot solve. There may be things we do not know as yet and problems we have not yet solved; but we cannot affirm the existence of limits to our knowledge without rising above them. If there were such limits we could not even become aware of them; and this is equal to saying that as all problems arise within Mind, it is within Mind that we must look for a

solution of all problems. In a sense we all must be idealists, and the very notion of a non-idealistic philosophy is self-contradictory, since every philosophy presupposes that reality is knowable. But we cannot remain satisfied, indeed we are no longer satisfied, with such a vague profession of idealism. Within idealism itself we may be tempted to adopt the method of explanation by reduction rather than by comprehension and levelling up. To say that reality is *nothing but* this or that, or that it is *merely* this or that, is at once to avoid synthetic effort and to pay a tribute to human weakness. This is what happens when Absolute Idealism proclaims the essentially historical nature of Mind, *i.e.* proclaims that Mind is always process, always creating itself for itself and therefore creating all its distinctions out of its own process. Idealism is right in proclaiming that History is the most concrete form of reality, that it is Mind's highest self-revelation to us ; but, as we have seen, and as even Croce admits it as against Gentile, Mind so understood cannot even explain its own distinctions. It gives no reasonable account of life and history in their rich diversities and even becomes a mere idle repetition of moments each of which is the whole Spirit ! Further, we have also seen that, though History is truly, as Croce says, always *contemporary history* in the sense that it is always for the present subject, yet it is not merely an analysis of the present. The past is no mere creation of or projection from the present; con-

sequently History is a *past present AS PAST in the present experience of the subject*, so that there is for each of us a historical objectivity, just as there is a whole realm of objectivity consisting of all other subjects in their different historical groupings and systematically connected in the unity of the universe as a whole. Finally, we have also seen that the universe in order not to be a mere aggregate but a system, and, further, a system compatible with the reality and conservation of values, requires that its unity should not be merely immanent, but transcendent, *i.e.* that the unity should be a Universal Subject: God. Now what does this mean but that, while the idealistic conception of History is abstract, we can reach a concrete conception of History, not by deducing it from an *a priori* notion of Mind, but by building it upon a critical examination of the irreducibly human and therefore ethical categories necessary to the understanding of historical processes? What does this mean but that if we take History in its concreteness, as the level of reality immediately higher than mere animal life, we find it a process whose significance is indissolubly connected with the belief in or the experience of God's creative, constant and directive action within it? In other words we recognise that just as biological categories are irreducibly higher than mechanical, so historical categories are irreducibly higher than purely biological or bio-psychological ones. We are thus also irresistibly

driven to recognise the irreducible purposive character of the highest self-disclosures of the Real and the incontestable superiority and greater depth and inclusiveness of the essentially historical, Theistic, Judaico-Christian outlook on the prevailingly metaphysical, statical, unprogressive and cyclical Hellenistic *Weltanschauung*. Hence, by considering History not as a dialectical impersonal process, in which ethical and personal values are abolished as purely "abstract," but as a process whose subjects are persons in social relations engaged in realising common values which can only be realised in and preserved through persons, we might claim, with far greater truth than the Neo-Hegelians, that History alone is indeed the true philosophy for us as for Psalmists and Prophets. Either the process of Reality is genuine History, genuine human progress from a beginning towards an end which is also a goal and a consummation, or it is mere empty and idle labour in the void. Either History is indeed the vehicle for the self-disclosure of what intrinsically is super-historical or it ranks no higher than a purely naturalistic process of alternating evolutions and dissolutions of material systems. It is some such conception of History reached not by reduction but by inclusiveness of all relevant and irreducible data which seems necessary to guarantee a more than purely empirical or subjective value to so many otherwise interesting and helpful reconstructions of religious history.

But no doubt the adoption of such an outlook would involve considerable risks for those who at the same time mean to remain not only within rigidly defined religious Bodies, but also within their ecclesiastical systems. Renan was certainly wrong in thinking that in order fully to understand a given religion you must have left it behind. It is most certainly truer to say that only those who live a given religion in its highest complexity and have a direct experience of it from within can authoritatively describe it and explain it to others. And yet it is still truer that, if ever a higher form of visible Christian unity were to become a fact, it is very unlikely that such a unity would coincide with the unchanged unity of any now existing Church, even of that which may contribute most towards it.

And yet it is just because it is extremely difficult for any heir of the universal spirit of ancient and mediæval Rome, of Dante and of Mazzini, to think that such universality is a mere shadow of the past; it is just because it looks almost absurdly blasphemous to think that the tradition out of which St. Francis of Assisi, the two Saint Catherines, Angela da Foligno, Aquinas, Filippo Neri, etc., have emerged and to which they have added so much depth and splendour has exhausted itself and has no further word to speak to the present and to the future, that these symptoms, however humble, of deeper spiritual life in Italy appear to us so significant not

for Italy alone. The whole world, through science, economics, and culture, is daily becoming more intimately one; nations and continents must daily more and more enter either into some form of co-operation or of war; they must daily understand each other more and more or become foes one of another; and enmity in the future is going to be more and more fatal to the possibilities of the good life for all. The struggle for the goods that diminish through sharing cannot, in the long run, but end fatally for civilisation, especially in its old European cradle, unless it finds a limit in the higher co-operation for the increase of the goods that do not diminish but are increased by sharing. Unless political and economic centrifugal forces are turned into co-operative agencies and based on even deeper common cultural and religious inspiration, cultural *and* religious, civilisation is doomed, since philosophical analysis and recent tremendous experiences alike point out the inadequacy not merely of cultural forces alone, but of even culture and religion as now existing. Obviously, just as a kiss is at the same time an expression of love and a help to deeper love, so, if this common inspiration and faith were to find a common visible expression and gradually to bring about the realisation of a unity inclusive of the best elements and experiences of all living Christian traditions and of all the positive goods achieved during the last four centuries, such a unity would be an immense coefficient towards the

truer peace of mankind. Certainly no true Christian can but long for such a consummation and for the elimination of the purely (to a great extent) historical and negative causes hindering it. Now, who can doubt that if this vision and longing of so many seers were to become fact, the Italian religious tradition, that was so greatly instrumental in bringing forth all that is best and imperishable in Catholicism in spite of its faults, would necessarily be the greatest contributor towards such freer, higher, truer Catholicism? It is unfortunately true that the spirit now prevailing in Italy—and, alas, not in Italy alone!—looks as if it were one of blatant, arrogant, brutal, Pagan, self-asserting Nationalism and State-idolatry, subversive of every individual liberty and responsibility, and even heedless of moral values in politics. But we must take broad and long views whenever we are dealing with nations, and especially with young nations. It is always unfair, as Burke warns us, to indict a whole nation. Italy is merely passing through a phase partly of weariness, partly of self-intoxication, such as, more or less, all nations have gone through after great wars; and Italy will, like other nations, outlive all her temporary failings and perversions and, sooner or later, recover her best and truest self. Italy, just as perhaps the whole modern world, is surely destined—it may be even through salutary and even necessary catastrophe—to discover the utter emptiness of any purely politico-economical might, of any

noisy greatness, nay, of any existence as a political entity, which is not based upon and instrumental to the only legitimate imperialism—the imperialism of the Spirit, of justice, truth, and charity:

Ecco chi crescerà i nostri amori.

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